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MARTINA McBRIDE CLEANS UP AT WAL-MART

UNIVERSAL MUSIC GETS BIG IN JAPAN

THE LAST AMERICAN VIRGIN MEGASTORE

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MOBILE ENTERTAINMENT LIVE
The mobile entertainment event of CTIA convenes top wireless, entertainment and advertising executives and includes a keynote interview with Rob Thomas. More details at billboardevents.com.

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U2 EXTENDED
After devouring the cover story, go to billboard.com to check out an online-exclusive in-depth Q&A with the Edge about U2's new album and upcoming world tour. Plus, we chart the band's blog buzz and more.

360 DEGREES OF BILLBOARD

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www.americanradiohistory.com
No Pay For Play

Don’t Let The RIAA Make Stations Pay For Music

By David K. Rehr

America’s local radio stations are facing a difficult battle that will require the support of every GM, PD, and DJ. After reaping billions of dollars inalbum and concert ticket sales from decades of free promotion by radio airplay, the RIAA—backed by the world’s fourth largest record label conglomerates—is asking Congress to require stations to pay a new performance fee for every song aired free to listeners. The legislative lassos, designed by local stations to be a new tax, would result in a massive payout from America’s hometown stations to the pockets of label executives. It amounts to nothing more than a bailout of the recorded music business.

According to a study by former Stanford economics professor James Deitzouros, free radio airplay is responsible for between $1.5 billion and $2.4 billion in annual music sales. Omitted from this figure are the additional billions in revenue generated through concert and merchandise sales, both of which also benefit from the promotional power of radio.

To truly understand the medium’s unparalleled promotional reach, one need only watch the annual music awards shows, where artist after artist stands on stage and thanks local stations for helping launch their career. Ask any label executive for advice on breaking a new artist, and they’ll likely tell you the same thing that Sony BMG executive VP Butch Waugh said just last year—that radio “reigns the best way to get to the listeners’ lives.”

Local radio reaches 235 million listeners every week, bringing communities not only music, but news, traffic and weather updates. Local radio employs about 100,000 Americans. During emergencies, it offers weather warnings and evacuation information. And after the clouds part and the hurricane waters recede, local radio helps citizens rebuild, organizing food and clothing drives for local shelters. A performance tax would put at risk many of these charitable efforts.

Most at risk would be stations that play niche formats, such as Spanish-language music outlets. As most station owners will tell you, AC, top 40 and sports/talk are among the most profitable formats. For many GMs overseeing a struggling hip-hop or Latino station, the introduction of a new performance tax could force them into an unfortunate choice: flip to the AC format or pick up a syndication deal with a popular talk host. On stations that don’t change formats, new artists would still lose out; since playlists can maximize a station’s return on investment, many radio programmers will have another reason to stick with proven hits by U2, Lil Wayne and Madonna rather than risk losing listeners by taking chances on developing artists.

Unfortunately, the RIAA has demonstrated a dismissive attitude to the impact of a performance tax on new artists and local radio listeners. Its membership includes some of the largest multinational corporations in the world, all of which have suffered recent revenue setbacks after failing to anticipate and adapt to a digital world where consumers have more options at their fingertips. Radio isn’t responsible for the ‘file sharing’ business model, so it shouldn’t be asked to fund it.

In the mid-February, Reps. Gene Green, D-Texas, and Mike Conway, R-Texas, and more than 100 bipartisan lawmakers introduced the Local Radio Freedom Act, which opposes the introduction of any new performance tax, fee or royalty on radio stations. The National Assn. of Broadcasters is working tirelessly to increase support for this resolution, but we need the help of every radio employee in America. If your elected representative hasn’t yet signed on, I urge you to ask him or her for support.

David K. Rehr is president/CEO of the National Assn. of Broadcasters.
BEATLES: Rock Band." The Beatles will finally go digital Sept. 9 with the release of "The Beatles: Rock Band." The game, first announced last October, will be released worldwide for the Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and Nintendo Wii, according to a statement. The game will mark the first time that the Beatles' music will be available in the digital realm.

Terra Firma, the private equity firm that owns EMI, has written off £1.4 billion ($1.7 billion) in its investments. The lion's share of that impairment charge is reportedly due to EMI, which it acquired in August 2007 for £2.4 billion ($4.9 billion at August 2007 rates). The impairment figure was revealed in Terra Firma's annual report. Terra Firma also is housing back £80 million ($100.7 million) in performance fees as a result of the write-down.

The U.S. radio industry is grappling with severe financial challenges as it contends with cutbacks in ad spending and a locked-up credit market.

Radio ad revenue growth posted double-digit percentage gains in the late '90s. But in the middle part of this decade, revenue growth slowed sharply before flattening, pressured by a shift in ad dollars to online platforms and advertisers waiting until the last minute to buy ad spots, which led to lower rates to fill inventory, the media research firm SNL Kagan observed in a recent report.

Now revenue is in decline, with no quick recovery in sight. After slipping 2% in 2007 to $21.3 billion, total U.S. radio ad revenue dropped 9% in 2008 to $19.5 billion, according to data released by the Radio Advertising Bureau.

Local revenue dropped 10% to $13.6 billion; national was down 12%, or $2.9 billion. Network revenue for 2008 was flat at $1.2 billion, as off-air jumped 7% to $2 billion.

Automotive, the industry's top ad category with 15% of total revenue, plunged 22% in 2008 to $2.5 billion. Radio's second-largest ad category—comprising communications, cellular and public utilities companies—was down about 10% at $1.7 billion.

In the fourth quarter, local advertising revenue was off by 13% to $1.2 billion while national revenue fell 14% to $7.35 million. Network revenue fell 4% for the quarter, to $208 million, and off-air revenue—which has been the new, fast-growing category—gained only 1%, to $444 million in the last quarter. In total, fourth-quarter radio revenue was down 11% to $4.6 billion.

Based on ad spending trends during the first several weeks of the year, Mark Piatrak, VP at Chantilly, Va., media research firm BIA Financial Network, estimates that revenue will decline another 10% in 2009.

"There is no denying that the economy is in really tough shape," he says. Beyond the recession-wrecked economy, radio has another problem: debt.

During the wave of consolidation that began in the '90s, companies took advantage of freely available debt financing to grow. As a result, the average pure-play radio business is now saddled with debt. SNL Kagan observed in a report published in February.

"That is not a sustainable long-term situation," the report said, adding that the industry "is now suffering from an acute leverage hangover."

While the firm is optimistic that radio companies will eventually emerge leaner and better equipped for the long term, it expects the current financial downturn to last for up to another 18 months, noting, "There are still many restructuring, mergers, significant asset sales and market reconfigurations along the way."

Similarly, Wachovia Capital Markets analyst Marc Ryvicker expects further short-term pain in the industry, where shares of publicly traded companies have been in free fall.

"With virtually no equity value in radio, we anticipate the quarter conference calls will be focused on deleveraging events, whether it be debt paydown or outright buybacks," Ryvicker observed in a recent research note. However, he added, "With the possibilities of bankruptcies and delistings continue to pressure the stocks, neither appears likely, as banks would rather refinance than own the assets, and the New York Stock Exchange and Nasdaq continue to relax listing requirements—at least for now."

In the most recent in a long line of dismal earnings releases, Cox Radio said in a March 4 report that it posted a fourth-quarter loss of $537.3 million, widening sharply from a loss of $52.1 million during the same period a year earlier, due to noncash impairment charges to write down the value of Federal Communications Commission licenses and goodwill on its books. The company's executives also warned that business was pacing 20% less than the same time last year and that when business is being booked it's happening "very late."

And on March 2, CC Media, the parent of industry giant Clear Channel, reported a staggering fourth-quarter loss of $5 billion, swinging from a profit of $321 million during the year-earlier period, due to impairment and goodwill write-downs partly related to its outdoor advertising business.

In a sign of the times, Clear Channel appointed venture capital fund executive John Kaufman to the newly created position of senior VP of revenue management. In an effort to improve the company's ability to support its sellers and advertisers, Kaufman will be hiring a team of up to 40 revenue managers deployed across 150 markets.

"The media business has changed dramatically in the past year," said Kaufman, who was previously the CEO of the Tribune Media Group. "We are focused on improving our ability to communicate more effectively with our sales partners, and we are excited to bring Kaufman on board to spearhead this effort."

"With the industry in a restructuring mode, there is a real opportunity for new ways of doing business," Kaufman added. "We believe that by investing in our sales force, we can better serve our clients and ultimately drive growth for the company."

Additionally, the company also announced on March 29 that it had sold its remaining ownership in its radio joint venture with the Spanish-language network Televisa, which it acquired in 2005 for $1.2 billion. The sale of the 39 radio stations, which are primarily located in the U.S., will result in a loss of approximately $140 million, according to the report.

"This transaction is consistent with our strategy to focus on our core media businesses," said Kaufman. "We believe this move will allow us to better allocate resources to our core operations and position Clear Channel for long-term growth."

"We are excited about the new direction of our company, and we look forward to working with Kaufman to help drive our business forward," he added.
Universal Tops in Japan

The Major Beats Avex, Sony For Most Market Share

Reflecting a continued shift in the competitive landscape of the Japanese music business, Universal Music Japan captured the largest share of physical music production in 2008, inching past the previous market leader Avex Group Holdings, according to Recording Industry Assn. of Japan (RIAJ) data obtained by Billboard.

Universal accounted for 16.8% of the total production value of physical music products, the primary measure of recorded-music market share in Japan. That exceeded Avex’s second-place share of 15.9%, while Sony Music Entertainment Japan, historically the market leader in its home country, came in third place in 2008 with a 14.2% market share.

The figures mark a sharp change from 2005, when Sony was tops with 18.9% of market share. Avex was second with 12.9% and Universal was third with 12.5%.

“Four years ago when I assumed responsibility for southeast Asia and Japan, it seemed almost impossible—Sony I think had been No. 1 for 30 years,” says Mas Holle, Universal Music Asia Pacific Region president and executive VP of Universal Music Group International. “It’s great because it’s something that we’ve done organically, not through acquisition, which makes it even better.”

Universal Music Group is now the market leader in the world’s top five territories for recorded music—the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, respectively.

Major domestic artists for Universal in Japan include pop acts G reeen and Thelma Aoyama. The latter’s “So-banirure” (Universal J) and Greeeen’s “Kiseki!” (Nayutawave) both scored huge sales, each selling between 7 million and 8 million downloads, according to Universal. The sales figures include full-track downloads, master ring tones and ringback tones in a market where mobile dominates download sales.

Digital sales weren’t included in the RIAJ’s market-share data.

“Our Japanese company had two of the top 10 top-selling digital tracks of 2008 in the world,” Holle says. “Thelma and Greeeen have had these huge, huge hit singles.”

Greeeen is also a million-selling album act, along with Hideshi Toku-naga, who released his “Vocalis 1” (Universal Sigma) album of covers in 2008. The 47-year-old singer has experienced a career revival with the “Vocalist” series, which is aimed at older listeners.

Universal Music Japan had five primary labels in 2008—Universal J, Universal Sigma, Nayutawave and the smaller Fo: Eastern Tribe and Milestone Crowds. In November, it announced the launch of a sixth imprint, Delicious Deli Records.

“When you have six labels run by motivated people who all want to do better than their colleagues, you get a lot of action,” Holle says.

The executive also credits the work of Universal Music Japan chairman/CEO Kei Ishizaka and president/COO Kazu Koike in transforming the company.

“We used to have a very moody A&R setup, very typical of Japan, and they were open to my suggestion that we should actually grow to what we now have, which is six labels, three large ones and three small ones, that compete with each other as A&R sources,” Holle says. “It’s what we do in the U.K. and France, but in Japan it was quite unusual. It’s really paid off.”

Stafﬁng at the company has also seen a change in recent years. “Four years ago we had a company that was quite old fashioned and most of the A&R people were in their 50s,” Holle says. “The revolution that we’ve undertaken is a move to six labels and a Western-style product management setup and empowering younger people in A&R.”

However, he notes that “experience counts for a great deal in Japan” and the major will continue to have a “blend of senior staff with younger staff.”

Additional reporting by Mitchell Peters.

SUCCESS IN NIHONGO

Universal Asia Paciﬁc Chief Max Hole Discusses Three Factors Behind The Label’s Climb In Japan

INCREASED INVESTMENT IN DOMESTIC A&R

“We have for a long time been No. 1 in international repertoire, selling American and British music,” Holle says. “But we were very poor in domestic. If you want to do well in Japan, you have to do well in domestic.”

Since 2005, Universal Music Japan has beefed up its commitment to local artist releases with new imprints and signings.

“The whole strategy was to get different A&R teams with different tastes competing with each other within the organization,” Holle says. “In the past, Japanese record companies used to work as a large team, and you didn’t get enough variation in tastes.”

With more A&R reps looking for talent, Universal has created more signings and a greater variety of acts, he says.

“The main point is that we increased gradually,” he says. “Obviously, it didn’t happen overnight.”

EXPLOITING TV, WEB

“Radio is not tremendously impactful in Japan,” Holle says. “If you want to get across to a mass audience, you need to connect on television and Japan is one of the few countries that still has a lot of TV shows that are music-oriented.”

An artist can connect with a Japanese TV audience in four ways: performing on shows like TV Asahi’s “Music Station” or Fuji TV’s “Hey! Hey! Hey! Music Champ!”; getting a song picked up as a theme in a dramatic series; striking a sync deal for an ad; or buying ad time. “But that’s very expensive,” Hole says of the last option.

He notes that sync deals and TV theme songs in dramas are the most popular means of reaching Japanese music fans through TV.

“It’s like anything—if you put the wrong song better than their colleagues, you get a lot of action,” Hole says.

The Internet is also a key promotional vehicle in Japan, particularly on wireless platforms. “Kids in Japan are almost born with a mobile phone attached to their hand,” Holle says. “We communicate with fans directly via mobile by e-mail and there are certain sites they like—Japanese versions of MySpace and Facebook.”

PROMOTION OF YOUNGER EXECs

“In the past, our organization tended to be controlled by people in their 50s,” Holle says, noting that the label now has senior executives, including label heads, in their 30s.

“In simple terms, it’s to bring people into the company and promote from within people who are in touch with the music that kids are buying,” Holle says. “So the label turned inward to find budding A&R talent. “We had a lot of good people from within who weren’t being encouraged enough,” he says.

“The majority of it would be promoting talented young people within the organization and then a sprinkling of other people from the outside who have a different view.”

―Mitchell Peters
MADCON WITH THE SMASH-HIT BEGGIN’ OUT NOW!

MULTI-PLATINUM STATUS, WORLD MUSIC AWARD WINNERS,
#2 BILLBOARD EUROPEAN HOT 100, OVER 20 MILLION VIEWS ON YOUTUBE,
TOP 10 ACT IN THE UK, FRANCE, GERMANY, SPAIN, PORTUGAL, RUSSIA, BELGIUM, AUSTRIA++

FINALLY OUT IN THE US WITH THE SMASH-HIT BEGGIN’
INUNDATED INBOX
PAPER FILINGS BACKLOGGED AT U.S. COPYRIGHT OFFICE

A potential headache for independent songwriters has emerged at the U.S. Copyright Office, which is contending with a backlog of about half a million paper filings that could require up to 16 months to process.

The number of applications in arrears is believed to include other creative works in addition to songs. The delay isn't likely to have a significant impact on music publishing companies, most of which file electronically. But the backlog could create problems for indie songwriters, many of whom still register for copyright with paper filings.

The backlog was acknowledged by Marybeth Peters, U.S. register of copyrights, when she appeared at a Feb. 18 copyright symposium in Los Angeles sponsored by the State Bar of California, according to publishing executives who attended the event. Representatives for the Copyright Office didn't respond to requests for comment.

"If it takes 16 months to get a copyright filed and an album is already released, that is a problem," says Songwriters Guild of America president Rick Carnes. "But the smart way is to file electronically. If you are too stupid to file electronically, how are you going to write a hit song?"

Cherry Lane Music Publishing switched to electronic filing in February 2008, according to the company's senior director of administration Peter Raleigh. For about 90% of its electronic filings, he says, "we are seeing six to eight weeks turnaround, which is excellent."

However, Raleigh adds that Cherry Lane is "still waiting" for the Copyright Office to issue an actual copyright certificate, as long as it receives a filing within three months of its publication date, a songwriter secures additional rights beyond the ability to seek compensatory damages in the event of infringement. Such rights include the ability to obtain statutory damages and legal fees, Rosenthal says.

As the Copyright Office works through its paper filing backlog, electronic filing provides songwriters and other authors of creative works a work-around solution for $10 less than the $45 cost of a paper filing. Another tactic often employed by record labels for upcoming releases is to preregister a yet-to-be completed work for $225.

And in the event that a songwriter wants to file an infringement claim on a song that's been caught in the backlog, a rush filing can be completed within two weeks for $685.

What you need: INXS

INXS Target Ads With New Warner/Chappell Deal

LONDON—The Australian rock band INXS is seeking to rebrand its catalog through an innovative direct licensing deal with its longtime publisher.

The band has renewed its worldwide contract with Warner/Chappell, which includes for the first time a "one-stop" sync master agreement for all territories outside the United States.

Chris Murphy, who managed INXS during its rise to multimillionaire prominence in the '80s and returned working with the band in 1994, says the pact is aimed at putting potential licensees in direct contact with the writers of such enduring hits as "Need You Tonight," "New Sensation," and "Suicide Blonde.

"This is still one of the greatest bands in the world," says Murphy, who spent six months re-searching the catalog's worldwide potential. "It didn't matter what country I went to. INXS is still played on radio, and not just one hit, but different tracks all the time. There's a big business here.

INXS had 18 hits on the Billboard Hot 100 between 1983 and 2005 and has sold 4.7 million albums in the United States since Nielsen SoundScan launched in 1991. The band sold 356,000 downloads in 2008, according to SoundScan.

Richard Mannes, managing director of Warner/Chappell Music U.K., says both parties are "looking at some very major brands" for synch after Murphy and INXS keyboard player Andrew Farriss—who co-wrote INXS's signature songs with the band's late frontman Michael Hutchence—spent a day-and-a-half with the Warner/Chappell sync team discussing the brands they wanted to pursue in different territories.

"We're tailoring this on a country-by-country basis," Mannes says. "Farriss notes that the process helped him "better understand the people that are trying to help you," adding that "the artist often gets removed from the business end, so I found this incredibly enlightening."

The band controls its recording masters, with the exception of the 1982-85 albums "Shabooh Shoobah," "The Swing," and "Listen Like Thieves," which are owned in perpetuity by Universal Music Group. Murphy says INXS—currently without a lead singer after the departure of J.D. Fortune (billboard.biz, March 6)—is working on "reimagining" some core material. In the meantime, he says, synch placements for the existing catalog are imminent.

"Business has already picked up," Murphy says. "The reactions are quick and promising. We used to take three weeks, now we do it in hours.

Additional reporting by Mark Sutherland in London.
Virgin Megastore Closings Mark British Exit From U.S.

The planned U.S. closures of the Virgin Megastore chain by mid-June will mark the end of the chain's music retail presence in this country. HMV was the first to land in November 1990, followed soon by Virgin and W.H. Smith. Tony Hirsch led HMV’s East Coast incursion, while Ian Duffell brought the Virgin Megastore in through the West Coast and Peter Bamford decided W.H. Smith should attack the country’s heartland by opening up in malls.

The three chains came in thinking they could touch the Americans a thing or two about merchandising music. But their high-handed attitude wasn’t directed at their competitors, like Tower Records, Camelot Music, Record World and other long-dead music chains. Rather, it was targeted at the record labels.

“They were arrogant,” a label sales executive told Retail Track about the British chains before Virgin confirmed its U.S. closings. “They thought they knew everything. They thought they were going to take the U.S. by storm. But I grew to love them. They were all good music guys and their stores were great.”

The British merchants were especially known for championing certain kinds of artists and genres. But their fatal flaw was a failure to understand the U.S. real estate market. HMV and Virgin had a history of over-paying for locations, which meant both chains usually had more unprofitable stores than profitable ones.

At its peak, the Virgin Megastore chain had 23 stores and revenue of $280 million annually, but at least 12 of those stores weren’t profitable.

After a four-year store-closing spree, the chain was down to six stores by January, all of them profitable, and combined were doing a very respectable $180 million in annual sales.

The chain’s New York Times Square location generated $55 million, with $6 million in profit, while its Union Square store downtown had $40 million in sales and a few million dollars in profit, according to sources.

With CD sales sliding, “I tried my hardest to come up with a new model, and we were making a lot of headway with it before the holidays,” says Virgin Entertainment Group North America CEO Simon Wright.

Virgin outsold HMV and W.H. Smith, with the former pulling out in 2004 and the latter selling out to Camelot Music in 1998. But Virgin couldn’t withstand the combined blows of big box and online giants, exclusives and digital cannibalization.

“We have made a great contribution to music retailing, but it’s time to move on,” Wright says.

In August 2007, Virgin Entertainment Group North America was bought by two real estate companies, the Related Cos. and Vornado Realty Trust, which hold stakes of 51% and 49%, respectively. In June 2008, a Vornado executive told Reuters that the Times Square store would shut down in first-quarter 2009 because it could make more money on the real estate. He said Virgin was paying only $54 per square foot. Vornado bought the 152,000-square-foot retail space at the bottom of the Bertelsmann building for $260 million in May 2006. So with the 70,000-square-foot Virgin Megastore there reaping $6 million in profit, that meant Virgin was only reaping about $97 per square foot in a neighborhood where retail rents average about $400-$500 per square foot, according to Faith Hope Consolo, chairman of Prudential Douglas Elliman Real Estate.

While Virgin was destined to lose its Times Square space, it might have been given a shot in the arm by the smaller Vornado-owned space formerly occupied by the Biz Cide bar and gaming arcade, sources say.

“But the holidays were what they were and the economy is what it is from there on,” Wright says. “The economy is so bad, it’s all about batten down the hatches.”

The Related Cos. owns the Union Square property that houses New York’s other remaining Virgin Megastore. Just as Tower Records once helped transform Broadway from a warehouse district into a top-notch retail street, the Virgin Megastore was key in revitalizing the Union Square area, which 10 years ago was filled with bargain stores and pot dealers.

“We changed the face of Union Square,” Wright says. “Related owned that block and built the condos on top and brought in the cinema, Circuit City and us. What will happen there now with both us and Circuit City leaving at the same time?”

Retail Track ED CHRISTIAN

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How To Bear The Bear Market

Indie Distributors Find Diversification Key To Withstanding Tough Times

When the Chicago indie Touch and Go closed its distribution business, laid off 20 employees and announced it was no longer signing new bands, shockwaves rippled through the indie music world. While most people know Touch and Go as the label responsible for breaking TV on the Radio and Yeah Yeah Yeahs, the death of its distribution business leaves 23 small indies scrambling to find new partners. While Touch and Go is the first indie operation to fall statewide in the current recession, overseas, the indie distributor Flexipps situation got into administration, and some observers expect others to follow in the wake of the demise of the retail outfits Zavvi and Woolworths.

Was Touch and Go an aberration, a well-run business that simply fell on hard times during a brutal recession? Or is its demise the first of many, as indie distributors sail into a perfect storm of declining sales and a falling economy?

“We really looked at Touch and Go as a model when we started, and them closing down was a huge shock for us,” says Nick Blandford, managing director of Secretly Canadian Distribution. “But we’re in good shape generally; we’re watching the books and being very cautious about any expansions. We’ve also had some hot records in the last few years, and that has made an impact.”

Likewise, Revolver Distribution GM Mike Toppe says business is strong. “I’m as surprised as anyone that we’re doing well, but we’ve been able to find the right records at the right times,” he says.

But not everyone is doing as well. “We’ve seen a drastic drop in the last two years and been in free fall for the last year especially,” says Johnny Phillips, owner of Select-O-Hits. “It started when Musicland went under, and it’s been downhill ever since, as more stores cut back their inventories.”

Phillips’ situation also proves that the downturn cuts across all genres. “I wasn’t that familiar with Touch and Go,” he says. “We do rap and gospel and Latin mostly; we’ve increased our digital business in the last four years, but we’re not making enough from it to offset what we lose from stores closing or cutting back. The biggest problem we face is bootlegging, not digital piracy; you go to any urban market and you’ll see booths selling burned copies of our albums.”

Burnside Distribution VP/GM Bill McNally also says that times are tough. “We’ve seen revenue from a lot of sources disappear,” he says. “Indies aren’t buying as much, and they’re using one-stops more, also helping Redeye Distribution survive the recession. ‘Chains are still the lion’s share of the business, but we’ve seen our indie store business grow significantly in comparison to the chains,’ president Tor Hansen says. ‘I recently hired someone to search out new indie outlets full time.’ What I’m seeing is a growth in stores that are like little lifestyle markets, stocking clothes and crafts and a curated selection of music. My business partner owns an independent record store, and he’s had to close a location and lay people off. We’ve had some layoffs of our own, although all the key people are still here.’

McNally says he’s trying to diversify Burnside’s offerings by building its digital distribution and international platforms.

“I believe diversification will get us through,” says Chris Scofield, label manager of NAI Distribution. “We’re a division of a large company, Allegro, which has doubled in size in the last few years and will redouble again soon. We’re not tied to the typical record stores; we have businesses like distributing DVDs to truck stops as well. The diversity of the business also helps me connect bands to nontraditional retail outlets; for instance, I got [the Cambodian-American band] Dengue Fever stocked at some museums.”

Reaching out beyond the usual outlets is...
At The End Of The World

U2's Upcoming Stadium Tour Will Boost A Well And Ambitious Set Design

The big question was where to go after video, which U2 had taken to a new level years ago, during the Zoo TV tour in 1991 and most impressively during the PopMart shows in 1997-98, the band's last international stadium tour. "It has lost any sense of originality now," Williams says. "For U2, it is very important to find new territory and new ways of presenting themselves."

The answer, he concluded, was a 360-degree design, which fits his mandate of bringing the band and the audience as close to each other as possible.

"The configuration indoors we discovered 20 years ago, which is a perfect configuration for U2, is to play in a 360 configuration with the stage at one end of the hall," Williams says. "The band have now grown incredibly adept at playing in all directions. That worked wonderfully well in ice hockey arenas, but outside there's this problem because there's no roof and nothing to hang the equipment from."

Williams says his goal was "to build a structure which would have those architectural aesthetics but also would serve to hang all of the enormous amount of equipment needed to do a U2 show," he explains. "For a long time I was concerned about the practicalities of holding the roof up, how to not cause sightline obstructions and all of this stuff. The breakthrough was when I realized instead of trying to make it smaller, what if it were big so that essentially just became part of the building?"

The answer was found in Paris at the bottom half of the Eiffel Tower, which is how Williams describes the staging. "We're building a kind of a giant, four-legged table which completely straddles the pitch," he says. "Everything hangs from that."

"At last count we were up to about 200 tons hanging from this thing," Williams says. "Because they're playing in all directions, there are four entire sound systems, four times the amount of weight of an arena show."

Drummer Larry Mullen Jr. will be based on a relatively small center stage, while singer Bono, guitarist The Edge and bassist Adam Clayton will be free to wander out on a walkway around the perimeter.

Video will still be part of the set, on a cylindrical screen that will hang over the stage and show live footage that will be directed by Tom Krueger of the cinematographers who worked on the "U2 3D" concert film.

The design team is international. "Mark Fisher, the English architect who has worked on U2 tours many times before, is back," Williams says. "And we're also still working with Chuck Hoberman, a kinetic engineer in New York famous for toys. He's got a fantastic mind for a more lateral approach to creating engineering structures."

The video screen manufacturer is Frederic Opsomer of Architecainment in Belgium, another veteran of previous U2 tours. "Tilt Towers of Liege, Pa., is building the main stage, StageCo in Tildonk, Belgium, is building the horizon and Brilliant Stages in Hitchin, England, is building some of the other larger pieces," Williams says. "Because this is being engineered between the U.K., Belgium and America, this is the production that never sleeps," Williams says. "There's always somebody up somewhere working on it."
Road Less Traveled

Fonseca Challenges Conventional Wisdom With Upcoming Theater Tour

Touring in the United States has always been a challenge for developing Latin pop acts, who suffer from a scarcity of Latin pop radio stations in many cities and a lack of tour support from their labels.

This makes the recently announced tour by Colombian tropical/pop singer/songwriter Fonseca all the more remarkable.

Fonseca will take his Gratitour (derived from the title of his 2008 album, "Gratitude") to 12 U.S. cities, expanding from his 2007 tour, when he played eight shows and grossed $230,000, according to Billboard's SoundScan, with total attendance of more than 9,000.

But back then, Fonseca was riding high on the success of his international hit “Te Mando Flores,” which spent 22 weeks on Billboard’s Hot Latin Songs chart, peaking at No. 8. His 2006 debut album, “Corazón” (EMI Latin), sold a total of 44,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

By contrast, his follow-up, “Gratitude,” has received radio support (the single “Arryerto” spent 30 weeks on the chart, peaking at No. 22), but the album has sold only 12,000 copies statewide.

However, Jeremy Norkin, a talent agent for the William Morris Agency, which booked the tour, is banking on Fonseca’s reputation as a strong performer, coupled with low touring costs and an aggressive management team that invests in its artist.

“You don’t need record sales to be a successful touring artist,” Norkin says. “The promotion and marketing of a new artist is no longer following the format it did when records were selling.”

Fonseca, a star in his native Colombia, plays arenas there and in neighboring countries. He averages 100 shows per year.

“We’ve built Fonseca’s career around selling concert tickets,” manager Felipe Jaramillo says. “The live portion of his career is fundamental. We’ve always invested in promotion and in touring; we’ve been profitable.”

Fonseca’s first U.S. tour consisted of four dates in 2006, including two outdoor festivals and a 100-seat club show in Los Angeles. Then in 2007, Ruptus Entertainment booked and produced his eight-stop stint.

“This time, we were conservative in not aiming for large venues,” Jaramillo says. “But we’re proud that we can take the artist to 12 different markets in the United States.

Fonseca kicks off his tour April 16 at the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts in Miami, which seats 1,567. He’ll then move on to venues like the Fillmore in New York and the El Rey Theatre in Los Angeles, as well as some clubs, mostly in new markets like Charlotte, N.C., and Dallas.

Two key factors make the tour possible: low costs and management investment.

“What are we supposed to do — say, ‘The economy is off, so we won’t tour?’” Jaramillo asks, noting that he doesn’t receive tour support from EMI and is still negotiating tour sponsors.

Ticket prices for Gratitour range from $22 to $57 and the shows have different promoters, from Live Nation and AEG Live to local promoters who are working various markets. Jaramillo hired a national publicist to coordinate promotional efforts.

Gratitour is a ground tour, divided into two legs that have been strategically laid out for cost-effective routing. It’s an anomaly for a theater tour, and the show also toured Latin pop radio stations.

Touring with the headlining Fonseca are his U.S. tour bus adventure — in between arena tours in Ecuador and Central America — as another way to present his music.

“If the U.S. market is like the entire world in a single country,” he says, “and the tour reflects that.”

For 24/7 Latin news and analysis, see www.billboard.biz/latin.

Wrigley Launches Latin Band Contest

Wrigley has launched an Internet music competition to promote its "5" brand of gum. The "Vive Tu Música" campaign will have five bands compete in a televised finale where they’ll perform for Mexican pop group Camila. The winning act will receive a recording session with an established Latin music producer. Through March 12, bands can upload audition videos at vivetumusica5.com. Fans will be able to vote online to choose the finalists, which will play at an April 30 show in Santa Monica, Calif. LATV will cover the competition and air promo spots with Camila. The campaign also includes TV, radio and online advertising.

—Leila Cobo

EN ESPANOL: Todos los grandes eventos de Latin music que te hemos contado les puedes ver en www.americanradiohistory.com
GLOBAL NEWSLINE

>>> CD SALES DROP IN NETHERLANDS
The retail value of CD album sales in the Netherlands fell to €223.9 million ($284.5 million) in 2008, a 6% drop from 2007, according to national IFPI affiliate NVPI. The value of music downloads rose 17.5% year on year to €141.1 million ($177.9 million). NVPI, which also represents video and games manufacturers, says total sales of CDs, DVDs and games rose 2.8% to €940.8 million ($1.2 billion) during the year. The rise was largely fueled by a 29.5% jump in sales of console games. —T.J. Lammers

>>> AUSTRALIA GOES WITH NOKIA
Nokia's all-you-can-eat mobile music service Comes With Music debuts March 20 in Australia. It will be available with the Nokia 5800 XpressMusic touch-screen cell phone, at a suggested price of $379 Australian ($640.36), including a 12-month Comes With Music subscription. The music plan will be available through numerous retailers. Australian subscribers will have access to 4 million titles licensed from all four majors and many indie labels. Downloads will have digital rights management restrictions but can be kept after the subscription expires. The service debuted last October in the United Kingdom. Nokia recently confirmed Singapore would be in the next wave of its international rollout but hasn't yet committed to a start date there. —Lars Brande

>>> SPAIN'S VETUSTA MORIA WINS
Pop-rock band Vetusta Morla was a triple winner at Spain's 13th Premios de La Musica music awards, announced Feb. 26 in Madrid. The Sonobiz/Plas act won awards for best new songwriter (for its track "Copenhague"), best artist and best alternative pop album. The new songwriter category saw the awards' first tie, with flamenco-soul singer Pitingo becoming a joint winner for "Soulistera" (Universal). The pop group Amalia's "Gato Negro Dragón Rojo" (EMI) was named best album. The 28-category awards are organized by the Academy of Arts and Sciences of Music, jointly run by the Spanish collecting society SGAE and artists association AIE. Voting is by those bodies' members. The awards will be presented at a televised gala March 12 in Badajoz. —Howell Llewellyn

>>> MATERIAL GIRL STRIKES GOLD
Madonna was among the winners at the 23rd annual Recording Industry Assn. of Japan Gold Disc Awards, held March 2 at Tokyo International Forum. At the 28-category, sales-based awards, Madonna was named international artist of the year. She also collected the masterton and PC download of the year awards for her single "Miles Away" (Warner Bros.). Coldplay's "Viva La Vida or Death and All His Friends" (EMI) was named international album of the year. AVE's Group's 14-member boy band EXILE was a double winner, snaring awards for (domestic) artist and album of the year for its collection "Ballad Best." —Rob Schwartz

>>> MYVIDEO SIGNS DEAL WITH WARNER
Warner Music Central Europe has signed an agreement with MyVideo to offer its users in Germany, Austria and Switzerland access to videos and other content by the major's domestic and international artists at the Web site MyVideo.de. Registration is free for the advertising-supported service. Warner Music Central Europe plans to use the platform as a digital marketing tool, with video premieres, exclusives, artist pages and embedded links to online retailers. MyVideo claims to be the largest video portal based in Germany with 7.4 million unique monthly users. —Jan Wilson

GLOBAL

Sanremo Revived

Revised Song Contest Proves Ratings Hit

MILAN—The Sanremo Festival, Italy's flagship televised music event, seems to be back on track after the 59th annual show scored its best ratings since 2001. In recent years, declining ratings, rows with the music industry and a series of scandals have tarnished the event's once unrivaled reputation as a platform for launching hit records. But this year, label executives lauded Sanremo artistic director/host Paolo Bonolis for transforming the event's fortunes.

Enzo Mazzà, president of the major-labels body FIMI and a leading critic of Sanremo in the past, cred its Bonolis with being receptive to the labels' ideas, such as teaming contestants in the new artists section with veterans like rock singer Zucchero and Burt Bacharach. Warner Music Italy chairman/CEO Massimo Giuliano and Claudio Ferrante, managing director of the indie label Carosello, both praise the host as a "great showman" who helped improve the program.

"Bonolis produced a new format that was far more appealing to younger viewers, unlike last year's slow-moving event," Maza says.

The song contest, which aired Feb. 17-21 on the state-owned broadcaster Rai Uno, scored an average audience of 10.3 million for a 49.7% audience share, according to the research company Auditel. That marked a sharp improvement from the average audience of 6.6 million and audience share of 35.4% that Sanremo captured in 2008, when TV personality Pippo Baudo hosted the event.

The final night of this year's festival drew 13.8 million viewers during the first half of the telecast, for a 49.7% audience share, and 11.3 million viewers in the second half, for a 64.1% share, improving from 9.6 million (39.5%) and 6.9 million (52.9%), respectively, last year.

Executives also credit high-profile international guests (including Annie Lennox, Katy Perry and celebrities like Kevin Spacey and Hugh Hefner) and greater investment in the sets and choreography with holding the attention of viewers.

The winners were Marco Carta in the main competition with the song "La Mia Forza" and Arisa in the new artists competition with "Sincerità." Sanremo musical director Giancarlo Atinga: The Sanremo Festival is still an attractive prospect for labels. Opposite page: Sanremo artistic director PAOLO BONOLIS (left) with co-host/comedian LUCA LAURENTI.

GLOBAL BY WOLFGANG SPANIR

IN THE LINE OF FIRE

German Touring Biz Challenges GEMA Royalty Hike

HAMBURG—Furious German concert promoters have pledged to fight the collecting society GEMA's plans to increase its income from live performances.

At the heart of the controversy is GEMA's announcement Feb. 2 of streamlined rates for performance right royalties from concerts. GEMA's previous rate varied between 3.9% and 8% of gross ticket revenue, but sources say a series of unofficial but routinely granted discounts and allowances meant the actual rates paid typically ranged from 1.5% to 3.6%.

Under the collecting society's new rates, GEMA would collect 2.4% of ticket revenue for concerts with an audience of up to 13,000 and 5% for concerts of more than 15,000. However, those rates would apply not only to ticket sales but to sponsorship and advertising revenue at concerts as well.

GEMA has also scrapped discounts, including an allowance for promoters' production costs, although members of concert promoters' associations who stage at least 15 concerts per year will still receive a discount of about 20%. In addition, the society said it would raise the royalty rate annually until it reaches 10% for concerts of all sizes by 2014.

GEMA's proposal was unanimously rejected Feb. 26 in a resolution voted at a joint meeting of the German Federal Live Entertainment Assn. and the Assn. of German Concert Directors. The two groups say a concert with an audience of 5,000 and a ticket price of €45 ($58) would have to pay royalties of €18,000 ($23,000) in 2014, up by more than fivefold from €3,370 ($4,308) in 2008. The organizations say they intend to explore all legal avenues to challenge the increases, which have already been referred to the government's Arbitration Office.

"The rate is out of all proportion to what is provided for the money paid," says Jens Michow, president of the live entertainment association. "We consider it to be immoral as it is a clear case of profiteering and therefore void." GEMA hadn't responded to the resolution by press time. But its members said the increase was justified in light of the recent growth of the German concert business. According to a survey by the market research company GfK on behalf of the Live Entertainment Assn., the German live entertainment industry generated sales of €3.9 billion ($4.9 billion) in 2007, more than double the €1.6 billion ($2 billion) generated by the German recorded music industry.

www.americanradiohistory.com
$3.9 B

The sales generated by the German live entertainment business in 2007.

"We cannot afford to accept any longer that cloakrooms make more money at a concert than the inventors/owners of the music performed," songwriter and GEMA member Frank Dostal says. "The sooner performers, their agents and the promoters remember whose songs they are singing, the sooner we will all have fairer shares in concerts."

After nine months of behind-the-scenes negotiations ended in deadlock, it now falls to the Arbitration Office to try and broker an agreement. It's expected to report back within 12 months, during which the difference between the old and new rates will be held in escrow. But the Arbitration Office's decision won't be binding, raising the prospect of a court battle.

Privately, touring sources say GEMA was offered a 2014 rate of 6% during the negotiations. But the live industry seems to be in no mood to compromise, with Michael Russ, chairman of the concert directors association, accusing GEMA of "aggressive behavior" that threatens to wreck an industry mostly composed of small and midsize operators.

Peter Schwenkow, CEO of the Berlin-based promoter DEAG, accuses GEMA of raising performance royalties from live entertainment to make up for declining sales of recorded music. "GEMA will receive more than the local concert organizer would normally earn, even though he bears most of the risk," Schwenkow says. "That's simply absurd."

But GEMA CEO Harald Heker insists the rate is in line with other international markets. "In the interests of the authors, we hope that a reasonable agreement can be reached," he says.

*Ti Voglio Senza Amore* (Lead/Halidon) and also at some of the scheduling decisions.

"If you perform at 9:30 in the evening, you're obviously going to get more viewers and votes than if you go on at midnight," he says. "The competition rules must guarantee equal opportunity and dignity for all participants."

Unlike previous Sanremo shows, organizers managed to ensure that such issues didn't overshadow the contest, with even the initial outrage over Bonolis' reported $1 million ($782,000) fee fading away.

"After the show," Ferrante says, "it's fair to say that Bonolis deserved his money."

Bonolis has already hinted he won't return in 2010. Muzzi says he "probably" won't be there either, noting that "Sanremo is a big commitment you should make a mental and physical break afterward."

Still, Ferrante remains optimistic about the event's future.

"I hope whoever succeeds Bonolis will make good use of his new format," he says. "I believe in Sanremo but if you asked me a year ago, I might not have been so positive." -

**Australia United**

Biz gathers for bushfire relief concerts

BRISBANE, Australia—Australia is fighting bushfires with music.

The country's music industry has planned two fund-raising concerts that promise to dwarf all other benefit shows seen on the continent. The March 14 Sound Relief concerts at the Sydney Cricket Ground and Melbourne Cricket Ground will feature top international acts Coldplay, Kings of Leon and Jack Johnson, while several local legends—including Midnight Oil, Hunters & Collectors and New Zealand's Split Enz—will bring a touch of magic by re-forming for the event. Gabriella Cilmi, Jet, Wolfmother and the Presets head a long list of home-grown contemporary performers joining the bill.

"It's been a joy but it's been a real sweet trying to make a deadline," says Frontier Touring managing director Michael Gudinski, who is helming the Melbourne event.

The concerts were announced Feb. 24, having been put together in less than two weeks. Proceeds from the Melbourne show will go to the Red Cross Victorian Bushfire Appeal, while donations from the Sydney show will be split equally to benefit the bushfire appeal and the Premier's Disaster Relief Fund Appeal in support of victims of the Queensland floods.

Organizing the Sydney concert is a consortium led by veteran promoter Michael Chugg, Australian Recording Industry Assn. Awards producer Mark Pope and Joe Segredo, a director of Sydney's International Music Concepts, promoter of the annual Homebake festival. The triumvirate has a track record with concerts of this nature. Chugg and his associates produced the Live Earth concert in July 2007 and the WaveAid tsunami benefit in January 2005, just weeks after the tragedy struck.

Even so, the bushfire relief concerts will be "unprecedented in terms of scale," Pope says. More than 100,000 tickets were snapped up on the first day of sale (March 4) for a total cost of $7.5 million Australian ($4.8 million). In comparison, the one-off WaveAid concert in 2005 generated $2.3 million Australian ($1.7 million) in gate receipts.

An area of the Melbourne Cricket Ground's hallowed grass pitch will be opened for seat-

fort for the bushfire cause.

"I have hardly sung a note since the Oils last played at WaveAid," says Garrett, now minister for the environment, heritage and the arts. "But this event is so unique and important that it will be terrific to catch up with my mates and put on a performance that gives all those people affected by the terrible events what they dearly need."

The rampant fires in the southeastern state of Victoria have been described as the worst natural disaster in the country's history. At press time, the death toll had reached 210, while hundreds of homes had been destroyed since the flames started flaring Feb. 7.

"The fires have gathered a lot of international interest," Gudinski says. "Hopefully, we're sending out a strong message. It's not just about money—it's about camaraderie, it's about fellow Australians. And the fact that the internationals have jumped in means it will be something truly special."
Man Over Machine

Technologies That Assist A&R Efforts Can Only Go So Far

A key factor behind any record label's success is its ability to discover new acts that will strike a chord with music fans. But just as the Internet has thrown the labels' distribution model into disarray, so has it affected A&R. In many cases, new technologies can assist with the process of finding new talent. The trick is to prevent it from becoming a crutch to replace the one thing it can never replicate—the human ear.

On the plus side, digital platforms that artists use to distribute and promote their music make it easy for others to track their progress. The simple practice of monitoring an artist's tally of MySpace friends has evolved into richer statistical analysis. Veteran A&R strategy consultant Paula Moore, founder/CEO of Treadstone Music Intelligence, says the key is to use a mix of new-media measurement with old-school scouting. Treadstone reviews digital metrics like social network friends, profile page visits, music streams and peer-to-peer (P2P) downloads and measures them against Nielsen SoundScan data, concert attendance and merch sales. What's more, she compares the two, looking to see if a band's MySpace hits are growing at the same pace and ratio as its ticket sales.

"As soon as the Internet exploded as a platform for artist exposure, it was really great for the artists that embraced it first," Moore says. "Now it's such a black hole of information, it's hard to cull meaningful artists out of online A&R research alone because there's so much of it."

Fortunately, there are also new analytics tools out there, such as one developed by professor Yuval Shavitt of Tel Aviv University's School of Electrical Engineering. He created an algorithm that analyzes data from the Gnutella P2P network and identifies potential breakout artists based on who has the most search requests in their local market. The software generated quite a bit of press among tech and consumer news circles late last year for its potential to replace an A&R scout's gut reaction with real science. Of course, the idea that A&R execs sign acts based purely on instinct is a bit of a myth, given that they take into account an act's fan base, turnout at local shows and other quantifiable factors.

Shavitt's software only automates some of that process, and for that reason it and others like it could prove a valuable tool. But it certainly won't replace the traditional A&R process.

There are also formulas designed to test whether a song will be a hit based on a recording's attributes. They analyze different elements of a song—melody, tempo, pitch, beat and harmony—then predict whether they'll be hits by comparing them to past chart-toppers.

Such data already forms the backbone of the recommendation engines used by digital music services. But even though they do help predict a song's hit potential, this is precisely the kind of technology that the music industry should avoid. Such programs reward formula over innovation, and that's not a recipe for success in any business.

Today's successful A&R exec will find music that stands out from the crowd, not blend in with it. The industry desperately needs hits that redefine genres, not copy them. It's unlikely these programs would have predicted the impact of Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone," Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" or the Sex Pistols' "Anarchy in the U.K." Finding artists who create music like that is what A&R should be about.

Technology will play an expanding role in finding talent, just as it will in helping artists reach fans. But it can't replace the need for actual people to play a curating role. Be it a record label searching for the next great act or a digital music service hoping to offer fans a better discovery experience, technology can only take them so far.
Kevin Arnold, founder and CEO of the Independent Online Distribution Alliance (IODA), has plenty to celebrate these days.

His company, which provides digital distribution for indie labels, is making inroads into new genres and markets. And he just wrapped the 16th annual Noise Pop Festival in San Francisco with stellar ticket sales and glowing reviews.

Arnold founded Noise Pop in 1993 and has watched it grow from a one-night event to an all-day, multimedia indie rock extravaganza. After jobs at Oracle Corp. and Listen.com, he formed IODA in 2003. The company provides digital distribution and marketing services to indie labels and bands and has even had success with more mainstream fare, such as “American Idol” runner-up Melinda Doolittle’s debut album “Coming Back to You.”

Arnold has also taken the company global. While IODA has distribution agreements in established markets like Japan, Germany and Spain, Arnold hasn’t been afraid to take risks and gamble in emerging markets like China, a place many in the music industry had given up on as being lost to piracy. In addition, he’s served on the advisory board of the Future of Music Coalition and has presented at numerous events about the intersections between music and technology.

Arnold managed to overcome a post-Noise Pop hangover to talk to Billboard about recent developments in digital music, opportunities in new markets and why Noise Pop had its best year ever.

IODA has been distributing Alison Krauss and Robert Plant’s album “Raising Sand” and the Willie Nelson/Axleist at the Wheel project. These aren’t acts that have traditionally had big digital sales. Yet the latter’s sales are 75% digital. How do you account for this?

With “Willy and the Wheel,” their success is something that definitely did come from the band for taking control of their own career. I think that’s the type of situation where they’ve been around forever, have a strong and loyal fan base and to them, I think it makes more sense for them to work through an independent. They tour all the time, they’re really productive with putting out records and those are the types of folks that are sort of taking their careers into their own hands. That said, I don’t think you push them from one-third digital sales over to two-thirds overnight. They look for certain services and they hit the companies that are going to be appropriate. They’re concerned with focusing outside of the more mainstream digital services like iTunes and finding places where you’re going to connect with that type of user a little bit more directly.

Did you see a big boost in digital sales in the wake of Plant and Krauss’ Grammy Award victories?

Yeah, absolutely. That record has had an incredibly long shelf life, and it definitely shot back up the charts after the Grammys. It’s a record that sort of crept around and had legs for the longest time; it essentially just won’t go away, and the whole goal there is to get more and more people to discover it, so it’s good that digital can play a role in all of that.

IODA recently partnered with the Chinese site Wawawa, which is attempting to offer a legal alternative to rampant piracy. Is it having any luck?

It’s up and running and I think that there’s growth, but I wouldn’t say that it’s anything mind-blowing. We approached it very experimentally. The service itself has gone through a little bit of evolution and we both sort of rushed to get that thing out and alive to the market and in front of the Olympics last year. They recently launched an integration with Windows Media Player, which might sound odd to us over here, but there it’s absolutely dominant thing, because it’s bundled with all the pirated copies of Windows.

They’re working on a number of different initiatives to partner with illegal MP3 search engines, to put banner ads along the top of the results page. I think they really want to give people a legal alternative, and the site is very inexpensive, so they think they can get people to part with a few yuan.

Do you have any other international deals on the horizon? We really are looking toward developing areas of the world. Lots of people are focused on territories like South America or Africa or the Middle East or India, the BRIC countries [Brazil, Russia, India and China]. We have a bunch of good partnerships in these areas, but they’re definitely [underdeveloped] from a digital perspective, so we’re looking for people to find the right solutions there. It goes back to what people have been talking about for a number of years, which is that these areas are largely mobile, and we need to try to put the music on the devices that people already have, like their cell phones.

Last fall, the Copyright Royalty Board (CRB) set mechanical royalty rates for digital downloads. What impact will these rates have on the digital market?

By setting fixed mechanical rates for digital downloads—at least for the next five years—you give labels the ability to function with more predictability. So that’s a very good thing for the development of the industry. There’s nothing here that will be noticed or absorbed by consumers but it will provide more transparency and clarity for the industry as a whole. The CRB ruling also set rates for streams, something that was definitely muddled in the past. These services have been unable to forecast revenue and make their deals as transparent and intelligent as possible because they didn’t have a clear formula to compute what they’d be paying for streams. Now they do. This clarity trickles down throughout the industry, which is a very good thing. Companies like IODA can now more effectively negotiate with these services to get the best rate for their clients.

Indie labels have had to battle digital retailers and other online services to be paid the same as their major-label counterparts. Where do things stand on that front?

Over the last several years, through the efforts of IODA and many others, rates have improved dramatically for independent labels. However there is still inequity in the market and we will continue to address it. That said, it is misleading to suggest that there is one set rate for all major-label artists and a lesser one for independent artists. Everyone—majors included—wants to get the best rate for their artists.

You’ve been involved with the Noise Pop Festival in San Francisco since it started 16 years ago and the most recent edition just wrapped up. Did the recession affect ticket sales at all?

Not to be hyperbolic, but I do think this was the best year ever. I spent the last day or two going, “Why? What is it? What did we do differently this year?” We have a great team of people that have been working on this for a number of years now. So, we’ve been able to tweak stuff in a little bit of the right way to make it a little bit tighter and overall more compelling. We were 95% sold-out across the board.
U2 GETS ON THEIR BOOTS FOR A TWO-YEAR TOUR THAT WILL PUT THE BAND AT THE CENTER OF STADIUMS AROUND THE WORLD

BY RAY WADDELL
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTON CORBIJN
THE CALLER ID READS “UNKNOWN CALLER”—not only the title of the fourth track from U2’s new album but a sign that the Edge is on the phone. “It’s all a game,” U2’s guitarist says. He and the band are in Germany to play the ECHO Awards, the third in a string of performances that included the Grammy Awards and the BRITs.

The band is making the rounds to set up “No Line on the Horizon,” its 12th studio album and its first in five years. And while the album represents a creative peak of sonic texture and musical detail, it’s not nearly as ambitious as the two-year world tour of stadiums the band will launch June 30 in Barcelona. Billed as the Kiss the Future tour, it will feature 360-degree in-the-round staging that’s never been seen before in venues of this size. (Further tour details will be announced March 9.)

“We’re very excited about the idea of going on the road with this album,” the Edge says. “I think it’s going to translate so well to the live context. The songs we’ve tried in rehearsal are sounding fantastic, so that’s got everyone really fired up.”

At a time when singles are emerging as the dominant way of consuming music, “No Line on the Horizon” is a fully realized album, one that could even revive the format, according to Interscope Geffen A&M chairman Jimmy Lovine—or at least send the current incarnation into history with a bang.

“We have to change the form of the album in order to satisfy the consumer and to get their attention on it again,” says Lovine, who first worked with U2 decades ago. “I believe that’s happening as we speak with this U2 record, and I believe this will be remembered as one of the last great albums in this form.”

For “No Line on the Horizon,” the band turned to producers Brian Eno, Daniel Lanois and Steve Lillywhite, who were also part of the songwriting process. “We went to Fee in Morocco for two weeks to just work on music,” the Edge says. “It was like a sort of musical composition workshop, and we all sat in a room together. Most of the ideas would have been generated there and then.”

Two songs on the album that came from that woodshedding emerged as two of the album’s biggest: “Unknown Caller” and the epic “Moment of Surrender.”

Those were songs that pretty much came together in the space of a couple of hours, and therefore probably were played in the final incarnation maybe once or twice,” the Edge says. “The biggest difference this time I suppose was the starting point for this record. We really didn’t have a clear agenda as far as a release date or a particular feel for what this album would be.”

U2 doesn’t have a formula for making albums, the Edge says. “We can go for a while not really seeming to make much progress, then suddenly a song will really take a huge leap forward for one reason or another, particularly toward the end of the album. I use the analogy of the Tibetan monks who do the calligraphy; it’s all about mixing the paints first, and that process takes a long time.”

Even the album’s promotional campaign is ambitious. U2 appeared on “Late Show With David Letterman” for five consecutive nights beginning March 2, a rarity for the band and a first for the show.

“Very early on we did a residency in our hometown of Dublin. We played at the Baggot Inn on Baggot Street on a regular Thursday night, when we were making our first album and first handful of singles,” the Edge says. “We also did a string of shows in the month of July one year, might have been 1979. We called them the ‘jingle ball’ because we decked out the entire club in Christmas decorations in the middle of summer. That was at a club called McGonagles, which is no longer there. Since then we’ve not done anything like this, so it will be not a totally new experience, but something we haven’t done in many, many years.”

U2 has always approached its concerts as epics, according to longtime manager Paul McGuinness. “I don’t think U2 have ever rested on their laurels as either a touring act or a recording act,” he says. “We have an in-house proverb: Every time we make a record we intend to break the band again, and that really is the discipline. If we released a record and didn’t gain new fans, we’d be very disappointed. Naming no names, there are big touring acts whose new records are not successful or very interesting, and it has to be both for U2.”

U2 will tour Europe through Aug. 22, then hit America starting Sept. 12 with a show at Soldier Field in Chicago; the band will play North America until Oct. 28 and work the globe until the fall of 2010.

In addition to its production firsts (see On the Road, page 10), Kiss the Future will almost certainly become one of the highest-grossing tours ever. At $89 million, the band’s 2005-07 Vertigo tour is second only to the Rolling Stones’ Bigger Bang. After playing arenas in North America and stadiums elsewhere on its last few tours, U2 will play stadiums everywhere this time out.

“This is going to be completely different, and that’s what makes it exciting—finding something new to bring to the touring culture,” the Edge says. “It’s hard to come up with something that’s fundamentally different, but we have, I think, on this tour. Where we’re taking our production we will not have been seen before by anybody, and that’s an amazing thing to be able to say.”

While the Edge doesn’t seem on edge as he and his bandmates hover on the brink of yet another world tour, McGuinness admits that launching a new album and a major tour comes with a certain amount of anxiety. “The industry and the world are changing very, very fast at the moment, and we’re all hoping that we can do something that’s appropriate, that works and succeeds and continues the careers of the artists we represent,” he says. “Anyone who says they’re not nervous when they put out an album is a liar. And anyone who puts tickets on sale in this economic climate and doesn’t wait with bated breath is a liar, too.”

Live Nation global music chairman Arthur Fogel and his team will produce and promote U2 worldwide, as they have for more than a decade. Right now, committing to a global stadium tour is “obviously a major undertaking on a bunch of different levels,” Fogel says. “On the last tour it basically broke down indoors in America and stadiums outside of America. Both shows were pretty different and they were both incredible, but I think the general feeling, and certainly mine, was the experience of U2 in a stadium is special and unique, and it would be great.
Night music: U2 performs (left) and shovels snow (inset) during the March 2 taping of “Late Show With David Letterman.” Above: Playing at London’s Hammersmith Palaces in 1981.

for North America to experience that the way the rest of the world did the last time around.”

What the band will do live on the Kiss the Future tour has never been done on this scale. By performing at the center of stadiums on a stage that can be seen from 360 degrees, the band will increase the capacity of venues by 15%-20%. There won’t be any “behind the stage” seating, since there really won’t be a behind the stage area.

The configuration opens up myriad opportunities for scaling ticket prices, an important consideration for Fogel and the band. “I feel very strongly that we needed to maintain and maybe even expand on our pricing philosophy,” he says. “I’ve never been a proponent of one or even two prices. There’s a logical way to price an arena or a stadium.”

The top-ticket price will be slightly higher than U2’s last tour but the bottom ticket price will be lower. Field-level tickets will be $55, in addition, there will be 10,000 tickets to every show for $30. Besides that, the price points are $250 and $90 or $95, depending on the market, Fogel says.

“Playing larger-capacity venues allows for more conservative pricing overall,” he says. “The interesting way to look at this is that 85% of the entire capacity will be $95 or less, 40% of the entire capacity will be $55 or less and 10,000 will be at $30. Usually when somebody wants to go after the top price, they talk about the best seats being too expensive. The reality is at a U2 show, this time, and last time in the arenas, the best place is $55.”

The premium-priced seats will be on the sides in the grandstands and will constitute about 15% of the house. “There are always people who want to pay the higher price to be in a well-located seat,” Fogel says. “But the reality is there are so many different ways to come at this seating in terms of a $30 or $50 ticket. In a funny way the top-priced tickets are subsidizing the lower-priced tickets, which is as it should be.”

McGuinness says the band recognizes the economic climate, even though he understands that they’ll probably take some shots for the prices of the most expensive tickets. But those top prices will fund jaw-dropping production, as well as allow the group to keep some tickets very cheap.

It’s also about demand. “Obviously, no one wants to be misunderstood, but on the last few U2 tours we underplayed markets—there wasn’t an unsold seat,” McGuinness says. “Selling out is important to us, but we’re going a lot further in supplying what we anticipate will be demand, and finding a way to do that logically and in engineering terms was the real challenge.”

The basic layout of the tour is Europe in July and August; America in September and October, with a total of 40-45 shows in 2009. In 2010, the band will play more stadiums in America in June and July, Europe in August and September, and, tentatively, South America that fall. Potentially the group could play 90-100 shows in the next two years.

The band will begin selling tickets in Europe in mid-March, and North American on-sales will probably start later that month. There will be some VIP packages available, Fogel says. “There are a couple of areas on the floor by the runway that map out logically to auction,” he says.

U2 will also bring back its random upgrade program from the 2001 Elevation tour. “There’s the stage, then a runway that goes on the outside of the stage that allows for people to be inside that circle between the stage and the runway—and with a ticket you buy for the field, the people who get inside that circle will be selected randomly by computer,” Fogel says. “If you actually ticketed that, you’d get secondary-marketed to death on those tickets.”

With respect to secondary-market tickets, “whatever arrangements we’re making or are participating in will be completely transparent,” McGuinness says. “We’re not going to ignore the reality, which is that secondary ticketing exists.”

This will be the first tour under U2’s 12-year multi-deals deal with Live Nation, although the band’s relationship with Fogel dates back to a 1979 show at the El Mocambo in Toronto. “Arthur and I are great friends and I’ve been very interested in the Live Nation project for years now, and we’ve been very supportive of it,” McGuinness says. “We obviously intend to go on performing for a long time to come and that’s what the deal reflects.”

And mega-production productions don’t come cheap. “When we did the Zoo TV tour in the early ’90s, that had a huge production,” McGuinness says. “But we were looking at tour using agents and individual promoters around the world, so we had to finance it ourselves, which was pretty terrifying. So working with a global promoter like Live Nation is really the only way to do it in terms of the investment and the startup.”

Fogel now works with U2 in the context of his role at Live Nation, but still looks out for the band himself. “On this and on Madonna [which he also produces], there’s definitely the expectation that those two clients aren’t looking for a bureaucracy to deal with,” he says. “They expect—and rightfully so, given their stature—that on a day-to-day basis I’m directing traffic. At this level it’s really the only way to do it because the cost factors on both the production side and the promotion side are absolutely linked. And it’s the most intelligent and efficient way to manage the economics of a tour like this.”

For the Edge and U2, this tour is about doing what they do: blowing audiences away. “There’s such a special thing that goes on between the band and the audience at a U2 show, and we never get tired of it. It’s like a kind of semi-religious experience for the band, and I think for the audience, too,” the Edge says. “For a lot of people it’s the soundtrack of their lives. It’s not just the band that they’re subsidizing, it’s themselves and their own history and connection with the music. It’s a very personal thing.”

As for the secret to the band’s longevity and continued passion, the Edge says there’s no simple answer. “I think good luck in many regards, and I suppose we just figured out how the idea of a band ego being bigger than all other egos. We’ve got egos, but we lay them on one side when we’re working together. All our agendas always align to the same idea: to make some great music together and put on some great performances, and whatever makes for a great album or live show is everyone’s priority.”

It helps that the members remain close friends. “We’ve held onto our friendship. We’ve still the friends we were when we started way back in the late ’70s,” the Edge says. “We know it’s sort of unique, but we’re also trying to keep it going, because not only is it fun but it also produces, we think, some great results in terms of music and live concerts. We all instinctively know we would really regret the end of it, should that come. So we’re all anxious to keep it going and to maintain our commitment to the band and what we can achieve for as long as possible.”

Iovine says the band’s fearlessness ensures its longevity as the members continue to reinvent themselves. “This band has many crossroads. I don’t know how they do it. They figure out a new challenge and a new way to overcome it,” he says. “Once you’ve got on an career, it’s easy to not want to go to that dark place and make a record—that is painful. They could easily sit on their sound, and they just don’t. Those guys fearlessly run toward that dark place; they’re first in line.”
SKU'ing

PEARL JAM, 'Ten' $199.98
The definitive grunge record gets the deluxe treatment.
How The Art Book
Is Becoming The New
Boxed Set—And Giving Labels
A High-Ticket Item To Sell

By Cortney Harding

During the past two years, one 29-
year-old Bay Area music fan reck-
ons she’s spent about $200 on
music. She gets most of her music
for free from blogs and BitTorrent
trackers, but one recent release
struck her as cool enough to get her
to lay down her credit card. That
album, a deluxe reissue of the
Beastie Boys album “Paul's Bou-
ique,” cost more than she spends
on music in most years.

This freeloading fan isn’t alone. As
of the end of February, the $129.99
deluxe edition of “Paul's Boutique”
had almost sold out its run of “a few
hundred” copies. Released by EMI
and the online music marketing
company Topspin, and sold only
on the Beastie Boys Web site, the
package includes a 180-gram vinyl
version of the album, a poster and a
T-shirt in addition to a CD copy and a
high-quality digital download.

So far, it has sold as many copies
as the lowest-priced reissue of the
album, an $11.99 download, accord-
ing to Topspin founder Ian Rogers.
(The album is also available on CD, vinyl
and high-quality digital download.)

In an era when bands have to sue
few fans to get them to pay $10 or
$15 for a plain-old CD, some bands
are getting a few to lay out more
than $100. During the past few
years, a number of bands have released
deluxe SKUs of their new albums,
including Radiohead, Nine Inch Nails
and U2 (the group just released a high-ticket
edition of “No Line on the Horizon.”) In the
next few months, this trickle will become a
flood of albums that will sell for more
than $50: an edition of Depeche Mode's
“Sounds of the Universe” will include
two hard-bound books of photos; a set of
unreleased Jane's Addiction tracks
will come in a wooden box; and a
reissue of Pearl Jam’s “Ten” will come
with an extra CD, a DVD and four
vinyl records in a linen-covered,
slipcased box with a replica of a demo
 cassette
made by Eddie Vedder.

OF RALPH LAUREN AND RADIOHEAD
At first there’s something
almost absurd about the idea
that fans who can get music for free
would spend so much money on
albums. The decline in CD sales
shows no sign of reversing, and
a generation of listeners has come
to see music as something that
resides only on a hard drive.

Then again, this is the same generation
that has come to see coffee as something
that costs $4. And the
fact that water comes out of the tap for free hasn’t prevented the growth of a large business based on selling it in bottles.

As with bottled water, the right packaging and presentation can create a perception of value in the minds of consumers. Albums, like art books, can have a value apart from the content they hold—especially if they look good on a coffee table. Which most CDs, in their cheap plastic packages, definitely do not.

“T’s a human response—if you’re really fanatic about something, you want something physical,” says Chris Huford, who co-manages Radiohead with Bryce Edge. “It gives you an additional level of ownership. And if you’re going to get something, you might as well make it good.”

High-end packages also give fans the kind of bragging rights that reinforce their sense of being involved with a particular artist. “Even though some bands are everywhere, you get a sense that you’re not connected to them in any meaningful way,” says Jeff Anderson, the founder of Artists in Residence, who sold a high-end edition of Nine Inch Nails’ “Ghosts I–IV,” that sold 2,500 $300 copies in a single weekend.

“What I try to do is create a collectible. People don’t want to pay a ton of money for something that feels like a repackage. Good, they want a new piece, and they want something that signifies their identity as a fan.”

And these packages—different from old-fashioned boxed sets as CDs are from record albums—lend more like collectibles than mere discs of music. In some cases, the high prices they sell for may even help convince consumers that they’re worth buying. “It’s the Ralph Lauren effect. If you charge more for it, people will think it’s really good.” Pearson CEO Marjorie Scardino said in a keynote address at the SIA Industry Summit, a gathering of information industry leaders. “With newspapers, we’ve been able to price it too low for too long. I mean, a newspaper costs less than the price of a latte. We pushed the price up at the Financial Times and we found that our readership went up.”

Deluxe editions also represent a way for an artist’s most dedicated followers to spend an amount of money that reflects the intensity of their devotion without making an album unaffordable to everyone else. “It’s really just the concert paradigm,” Nine Inch Nails manager Jim Guerinot says. “First-row seats are a premium; if you’re only a casual fan, you’ll buy the cheap seats. We did this with our merch. In terms of selling a wide range of goods, so the deluxe edition seemed logical.”

Both U2, whose album was released March 1, and Pearl Jam, whose reissue is out March 24, have taken that philosophy to the logical extreme. Sony Legacy will sell Pearl Jam’s “Ten” as a $19.98 two-CD set; a $24.98 double LP set; a $40.98 package that includes two CDs and a DVD; and a $19.98 package that includes—deep breath—two CDs, four LPs, a DVD of Pearl Jam’s previously unreleased “MTV Unplugged” performance, a cassette of demos, replicas of mementos from the collections of Eddie Vedder and Jeff Ament, a velvet envelope with more ephemera and a print commemorating a concert from the time. U2 will also sell “No Line on the Horizon” in several editions, from a $13.99 CD to a $95.98 deluxe set.

Although the idea of selling different versions of similar goods is new to the music business, it’s a well-established practice in the auto industry and the fashion world, where designers will create a high-end version of an item of clothing and then license their name to companies that make simpler versions. And instead of turning off consumers, high-priced items often lead them to see basic versions as bargains. “A $50 edition with some cool stuff looks really cheap in comparison to a $100 set with more cool stuff,” says Craig Pepe, the senior manager for music at Amazon. “If there is a version that is slightly more deluxe than the cheapest version, we’ll see consumers gravitate toward that.”

THE BANDS IN THE BOX

The idea of selling a pricey package of music certainly isn’t a new idea: boxed sets have been around since the ’70s. But those products were all about the amount of music—the number of CDs or individual tracks they included. These deluxe editions are selling packaging as much as music, making albums something to save at a time when music is often seen as disposable. It still isn’t possible to download an art book.

Like boxed sets, deluxe editions can offer higher profit margins. Although it can be expensive to manufacture deluxe cases in small amounts, CDs and DVDs don’t cost much, of course, and decent-looking art books can be printed for about $10. And the same DVD or book can sometimes be used in more than one version of an album. But even though labels can earn more money on deluxe editions than on ordinary CDs, consumers seem to perceive them as a better buy—perhaps because the music business has habituated them to the idea of deluxe releases. “DVDs usually have multiple SKUs and different editions and I think the music industry took a look at what the DVD industry was doing and decided to try to copy that,” says Carl Mello, the senior buyer at the Boston-based indie chain Newbury Comics. One edition of “Reservoir Dogs” came packaged as a gas can, and “collectible” editions of the “Lord of the Rings” movies contained statuettes.

Although the profit margins on deluxe editions are high, the revenue might not even amount to much at the retail level. “The Nine Inch Nails sellout looks impressive, but if you have something limited to 2,500 copies that’s spread out over a number of stores, they’re not going to get much out of it,” Mello says. “I can see it working for a retailer if it were an exclusive, but it wouldn’t have an impact on stores.” (It’s hard to measure any impact, since Nielsen SoundScan doesn’t measure the sales of most of these products because it sorts releases by title and not by SKU.)

That’s one reason why many of these releases are sold only on Web sites. Another is that sites can take pre-orders to avoid making more packages than they can sell.

Even so, very few artists can sell a deluxe edition. After Portishead asked fans for suggestions on how to sell its music, bloggers at Creative Commons suggested that the group follow the lead of Nine Inch Nails. The group released a $60 set, but its own copy arrived in the mail damaged and Mello says it didn’t sell well.

Perhaps PearlJam fans aren’t dedicated enough. Or, maybe the group’s fans are too young to have forged an attachment to the idea of physical product, as listeners of Nine Inch Nails and Jane’s Addiction have.

“Theoretically, you could build a package for pretty much any band,” says John Ingrassia, who put together the deal for the “Ten” reissue at president of Sony BMG Music Entertainment’s commercial music group and has since left the company. “But only a select group of bands have the fan base to make these worthwhile.”

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EXTREME EDITIONS

Some Artists Are Selling Downloads, Discs And Their Own Kitchen Sinks

Nine Inch Nails’ $300 edition of “Ghosts I–IV” might be the gold standard for deluxe editions so far. But the group’s former drummer, Josh Freese, might give Trent Reznor a run for his money. Freese, a session drummer widely regarded as one of the best in the business, is releasing his new album, “Since 1972,” at price points ranging from $7 to $75,000.

Freese is offering a personal phone call with the $50 package; a chance to cut his hair and dinner at Sizzler for $500; and a drug-fueled ride through Hollywood in a sports car as part of the $75,000 package.

The singer/songwriter John Wesley Harding is also offering some unusual extras to fans who buy his new album, “Who Was Changed and Who Was Dead.” The least expensive edition includes a CD, a digital download and a bonus live disc for $15.98; the “superfancy” package contains the CD, download and bonus live disc, plus a DVD, T-shirt and signed art for $79.98. And one fan willing to shell out $5,000 will get this “superfancy” package, plus a private concert at the venue of his choosing—even if that’s a living room.

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Searching For New Digital Models As Physical Sales Continue To Fall

BY ROBERT THOMPSON

The decline in physical sales and delays in new business models are the key issues facing the music business in Canada. As industry leaders convene March 11-14 in Toronto for Canadian Music Week, Billboard asked executives to weigh in on the challenges facing the world's sixth-largest music market.

"Trying to figure out what the revenue model is going forward is the No. 1 issue facing the industry in this country," says Grant Dexter, president of MapleMusic, one of the country's more successful distributors and labels.

"You look at the declines we saw last year and you think, 'Holy crap, where is this going to stop?'" According to Nielsen SoundScanCanada, album sales fell by 8.5% in 2008. And though digital sales increased by 69% to climb to $3.97 million, it wasn't nearly enough to offset declines.

Dexter feels the industry is heading into a period of contraction that is necessitated by the credit crisis and economic slowdown, and aided by the rapid fall of catalog sales, which dropped 26% in 2008, according to SoundScan. Last year Quebec-based Fusion 3, the largest indie distributor in the country, fell into bankruptcy, and Dexter says indie labels are likely next to feel the crunch.

Part of the distribution problem comes down to retail. HMV Canada dominates the market with 123 stores, and the retailer continues to push games and DVDs to its front displays.

In other cases, retailers like A&B Sound and Music World didn't survive 2008. Both filed for bankruptcy.

"In some places in Canada it is not easy for a willing buyer with cash in hand to find a place to purchase music," says Graham Henderson, president of the Canadian Recording Industry Assn., which represents Canada's major labels. "Music has been moved from the front right of stores, to the left and finally to the back."

With retail struggling, the digital market, despite still not rivaling the United States as a percentage of overall sales, still presents plenty of opportunities for artists and labels, says music attorney Chris Taylor, who also runs the record label Last Gang. "The digital market oppo...continued on >p26
from >>925 opportunities are phenomenal," he says. "As a label we try to work with artists that are lifestyle leaders and culturally dynamic, which magnetizes an audience. As a result, we hope it inspires purchase of the entire album—not just singles. With no packaging costs, no shipping costs, no returns, I'm bullish on the segment!"

Henderson says the digital market needs to be supported by stronger copyright laws. In early 2008 the Canadian government introduced legislation designed to update the country's Copyright Act, but the bill wasn't passed before an election was called. There is renewed discussion about the introduction of the bill once again this year, but those in the industry have grown frustrated with the constant delays during the past decade.

"This isn't even a music issue—it is a content issue," Henderson says. "This is an issue that faces content across Canada, from books to film, and I think we'll continue to see these groups push forward for stronger protections." Dexter and Taylor are concerned about the lack of new domestic stars and sales of Canadian artists. Last year Nickelback led all domestic acts with only 216,000 albums sold, far cry from a decade previous when an established Canadian act like the Tragically Hip would regularly sell more than 500,000 albums in the country.

There is an upside though, Taylor says. "There are a lot more artists that can cobble together a decent career by connecting global markets via online outreach," he says. "More and more niches and small ponds develop. They may not own four houses around the world or fly private anywhere, but they are living respectably and playing by their own rules."

Perhaps the biggest concern is this: If there's a bright light at the end of the dark tunnel of declining sales, industry experts are having a tough time seeing it.

"This is pretty challenging right now," Dexter says. "We're losing our star system, and cash flow for a lot of businesses is a real problem. I also don't think we know where the bottom of this cycle is." In order to survive, labels will have to become even more savvy about how they generate income, he adds. "You've got to stop thinking about record companies and think about entertainment companies," Dexter says. "That might be 360 deals, or song placements or whatever. But that's what we need to do.

The Canadian music industry has grown frustrated with delayed plans to strengthen copyright laws.

FACT FILE:
CANADIAN MUSIC WEEK
WHAT: A music industry conference, trade show, awards event, film festival and music festival, showcasing some 500 acts during Canadian Musicfest '09.
WHERE: The Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto and 45 showcase locations.
WHEN: March 11-14
WEB: cmw.net

THE DIGITAL DEBATE

With overall album sales dropping 8.5% last year, Canadian Music Week president Noll Dixon is well aware that the country's celebration of its music must reflect changing trends. That means there will be a significant focus on the interaction between the music business and Internet service providers at this year's CMW conference, which is attended by more than 2,500 people from throughout Canada and the world. CMW takes place March 11-14 in Toronto.

"There's a huge issue with music sales, and the question is, Who is responsible?" he says. "No one is volunteering here. Should we legalize file sharing and put a tariff in place? What needs to be done? That's something that we need to focus on."

To do so, Dixon has assembled a panel for the "View From the Top" session that includes broadcasters, recording executives, music publishers and Internet representatives to debate the way forward. Among those speaking at the conference is Gene Simmons. The Kiss bassist and entrepreneur reconnected with Canada this year by relaunching his Simmons Records backed by Universal Music and entrepreneur Belinda Stronach. Other speakers include MP3.com founder Michael Robertson and producer/musician Nile Rodgers.

Another major focus of CMW will be the continued interest in China. The conference kicks off with him giving an address about the opportunities and pitfalls in dealing with China, a country that is often viewed with trepidation despite its potentially huge upside. Dixon says 26 companies involved in the music industry in China will attend the conference.
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Canadian Live Business Is Cautiously Optimistic

BY RAY WADDELL

Canada has been productive territory for touring artists of all stripes for several years running, propelled by the country's strong dollar and huge demand for live music.

While a decline in the Canadian dollar may spur a cooling-off period, so far business is holding up. While the dollar up north was on par with the U.S. dollar, it is now worth about 80 cents in U.S. currency.

The state of the live business will be among the key topics during Canadian Music Week March 11-14 in Toronto.

"The touring business in Canada, and specifically Toronto, is holding up well, relatively speaking," says Pati Anne Tarlton, VP of live entertainment for Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment, which manages the Air Canada Centre in Toronto.

So far, business has been good, Tarlton says. "At Air Canada Centre, we had the strongest last half of the calendar year on record," she says. "Looking into 2009, I see the industry treading with caution, however, the headliners are still selling.

Currently, the center is set to host double dates from Elton John/Billy Joel and Britney Spears, and individual shows by Fleetwood Mac, Bruce Springsteen and Canadian comedian Russell Peters "blew out." Tarlton says.

Across the provincial border into Montreal, Jacques Aubé—VP/GM at Gillett Entertainment Group, which promotes the Bell Centre—says the live business in Quebec is "very steady."

"We had some uncertainty in October and November, but things have picked up in a big way in 2009," Aubé says. "We have more shows on sale right now than we did last year and they are selling really well."

Still, the declining currency value could have an impact, particularly for those caught off guard.

"The dive of the Canadian dollar hurt late last year, as the event deals were cut well before the dollar dropped off," Tarlton says, adding that once adjustments are made, the fallout is nothing new for deal makers.

"We have coped with currency exchange line items in the past and will in the future," Tarlton says. "The dollar at par was sure great while it lasted."

Live Nation Canada chairman Riley O'Connor says tours just need to adapt.

"Business on touring is consistent," O'Connor says. "The impact of the dollar is the same as it has always been. [Just] make sure you build in the variance in fluctuating currency exchange."

Aubé says, "The Canadian dollar going down obviously impacts how much we can pay international artists, but so far it has not really affected our business. The main issue is volatility, large drops in a short period of time make our job much more difficult. As long as the dollar remains relatively stable, we can offer accordingly."

Certainly the overall Canadian economy is faring better than the recession-hammered United States, so tours might do well to look north if for no better reason than to tap into a healthier discretionary spending pattern. Still, consumer anxiety knows no borders.

"Canada is holding up well, all things considered," Tarlton says. "We may be in a better shape than our neighbors south of the border, but we are still living through the impact of cautionary consumer spending."

And economic challenges can serve to make the business work smarter, Aubé believes.

"The global economic slowdown seems to have forced agents, managers [and] promoters to have a more realistic view of ticket prices and guarantees," he says. "So that seems to be negating some of the possible impact."
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Five Canadian Acts Burning Their Way To International Acclaim BY ROBERT THOMPSON

In its annual special report on the music scene in Canada, Billboard has tipped off readers early to the best acts emerging from north of the border, from Arcade Fire to Tokyo Police Club. As Canadian Music Week takes place March 11-14 in Toronto, Billboard continues its tradition of talent-scouting with profiles of five Canadian acts to watch this year.

HEY ROSETTA
Album: "Into Your Lungs"
Label: Sonic
Manager: Jason Burns

The gang-size lineup of Newfoundland's Hey Rosetta has led some to compare the band to Montreal's Arcade Fire. Both bands have numerous members and offer engaging frontmen, and both work the grand side of rock music. Hey Rosetta offers songs that run the gamut from intimate and quiet to loud and fast, but always epic, similar to Arcade Fire's style. The act's debut album, "Into Your Lungs," produced by Haski Workman, is full of memorable tracks, leading many critics to name the group as the next Canadian breakthrough on the international scene. For the album track "Red Heart," the band filmed a video with director Gabriel Allard-Gagnon. Hey Rosetta is based in relatively remote St. John's, Newfoundland, which means the group doesn't tour as often as it should. But a New York performance in early March should boost the band's profile.

BEAST
Album: "Beast"
Label: Pheromone Recordings/Universal Music Canada
Management: Sebastien Nasra, Avalanche Productions

Montreal's Beast has captured the imagination of Canadians (and fans abroad through several European record licensing deals) with music that one critic called "Portishead meets Rage Against the Machine." The band is the creation of composer/drummer Jean-Phi Goncalves and vocalist Beatrice Bonfissi, best-known for her work with DJ Champion and on the soundtrack to "The Triplets of Belleville." Featuring a heavy disco stomp, Beast's self-titled debut has come out of nowhere to become a surprise success. Combining everything from rap to soul, and jazz to funk, Beast's eclectic nature forces listeners to approach the band's sound with an open mind. Beast also will play a South by Southwest showcase March 18 in Austin.
JENN GRANT
Album: “Echoes”
Label: Six Shooter
Management: Shauna de Cartier

Halifax, Nova Scotia’s Jenn Grant comes across like a jazzy version of Aimee Mann. Initially part of the orchestral pop band the Heavy Blinkers, Grant released her first solo EP in 2005. She followed it two years later with “Orchestra for the Moon,” for which she filmed a video of the track “Dreamer.” Her latest, “Echoes,” hit stores in February and features Grant’s smoky vocals over well-constructed, carefully crafted songs. Characterized as a breakup album, the dark overtones of Grant’s voice are matched by an often minimal approach to the arrangements. Strings and brass instruments slide in and out, always finding their place in support of Grant’s often understated delivery. Given the multiplatinum success of Feist, it isn’t hard to envision music fans embracing Grant’s own tastefully created songs.

CRYSTAL CASTLES
Album: “Crystal Castles”
Label: Last Gang
Management: James Sandom, SuperVision

With gigs including the NME Awards show at London’s O2 Arena last month, Crystal Castles have caused a stir in the United Kingdom before anyone in Canada paid too much attention, but the act now is gaining momentum like a runaway train. The band is signed to Last Gang Records by label founder Chris Taylor, who achieved success with the similarly noisy Death From Above 1979. Much of the buzz around the band has focused on dynamic frontwoman Alice Glass. The group’s début, which focuses on merging minimalist electronic tendencies with blips and beats, is a polarizing affair. But judging by their reception while opening gigs for the likes of the Cure, Crystal Castles have some powerful supporters. They’ll likely gain more with a booking this June at the Bonnaroo Festival.

RUBY JEAN & THE THOUGHTFUL BEES
Album: “Ruby Jean and the Thoughtful Bees”
Label: Youth Club
Management: self-managed

Take a group of Halifax musicians intent on making dance music with a rock influence. Add singer/songwriter Rebekah Higgs, and the result is a kind of pulsing, intelligent and danceable music that makes the floor move and puts a swing in the step of indie kids as well. Thought Higgs’ vocals are put through an array of effects designed to modulate and distort her singing, she comes off as the star here, a diva in the making. Top it off with the fact that the band seems to be taking great enjoyment in the show—dressing up, instead of just wearing the indie-kid uniform of jeans and shirts—and you have an act that could blast its way out of the clubs. Also worth watching is Higgs, who put out a guitar-heavy solo album in 2007 and is working on the follow-up. Higgs is also playing a showcase during Canadian Music Week.

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During the course of 17 years, Martina McBride has gone from country singer to country queen. She's produced two of her 10 albums; she owns Blackbird Studio, one of Nashville's premiere recording facilities; and she's sold 13.2 million albums, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

But in this era of declining music sales, even being royalty isn't enough. For her March 24 album “Shine” (RCA Nashville), McBride teamed with Dann Huff, who produces Rascal Flatts and Keith Urban, for a fresh perspective on her sound—and is partnering with everything from Wal-Mart to A&E to promote the set.

McBride seems reinvigorated as she prepares to show off some tracks from the new project at Blackbird. Her husband, John, who co-owns the studio, cues up songs and throws in commentary before leaving to pick up the couple's oldest daughter from school.

“One thing I hoped for when I started out was longevity,” McBride says. “Seventeen years is pretty amazing and I still feel like we have room to grow and we're still viable. We're making new, fresh music and I still have things to express and I still have people that want to be with me on this journey and want to hear what I have to say. It's really great.”

Huff played guitar on McBride's records for years, and at a surprise birthday party for him, McBride made her intentions of him producing known to all. “She said, ‘Happy Birthday and all, but it's about time you produced my record.'” Huff recalls. “How can I say no to that? I've been waiting for that call for a long time.”

After a long association with Paul Worley and two self-produced albums, including 2007's “Waking Up Laughing,” McBride decided it was time for a change. “I wanted to move forward, which isn't always easy,” she says. “It was time to find somebody with a different, fresh perspective on my music. The hardest part for me was letting go of the reins after being so heavily involved in the production side.” Huff credits McBride with stepping out of her comfort zone. “She was very willing to expose herself. That takes a lot guts, because she’s built up a body of work and has created quite a legacy.”

In the studio, “it was like two freight trains hitting each other, but in a great way.” Huff says of the recording process. “The record shows a lot of growth for her. It was lovely and intense and all the things that go into a great record.”

The results of the Huff/McBride collaboration come through loud and clear. The first single, “Ride,” which is No. 16 on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart, “is full of life and energy,” says Tony Thomas, music director at KMFS Seattle. “It jumps out of the speakers,” he says. “From early in her career she's found songs that fit who she is. Martina's material has always been elevated by her performance of it.”

The emotional: “Walk Away” is a perfect example of the blend of new vs. old McBride that the album offers. “It sound like something that's familiar, like my older records, but there's still an element about it, both lyrically and from a production standpoint, that is very fresh,” McBride says. “It's the best of both worlds.”

McBride will hit the road this fall for a headlining tour, as well as perform on NBC's “Today” on street date and on the syndicated “Live With Regis and Kelly” March 25. She also taped an episode of A&E's “Private Sessions,” which will first air April 5 and will repeat throughout the month.

“Shine” is part of Wal-Mart's Soundcheck program, which will feature videos of her performing tracks from the album on the chain's Web site and in stores—and since it also will be part of a promotion by Suave, the album will be sold in the health and beauty section as part of display featuring McBride's image amid the brand's hair care products.

“Anytime we can be in other places in the store besides the music section, it's great,” says Tom Balderca, VP of marketing for Sony Music Nashville. “It's a good deal all the way around. It's a great brand association for Suave, it's a great brand association for Martina and a great opportunity for us to be in a highly trafficked area.”
GAME THEORY

Lady Sovereign Revamps, Returns With 'Jigsaw'

In the fall of 2006, the U.K. rapper Lady Sovereign was riding high. She'd signed with Def Jam, secured an opening slot on Gwen Stefani's tour, and had a hit with "Love Me or Hate Me.

And as quickly as all that happened, it collapsed just as fast. She returned to the United Kingdom from touring, moved back in with her father and spent a long time decompressing. "I was mainly doing press, and shows," she says. "The shows were fan of some of the times, but they didn't give me a chance to make any new music; they were just working me. We were just working me, and I got tired of it."

Now 23, Lady Sovereign is re-emerging with a whole new outlook, both musically and as a budding label owner. Her label, Midget Records, has secured a distribution deal with EMI for the United States and the United Kingdom. Her next album, "Jigsaw," is due April 7 and is a much more diverse, poppy collection of songs.

While she still considers herself a rapper, her delivery has slowed down, and at times she rhymes. There's a playfulness that recalls Lily Allen, but the album's material digs deep into her tumultuous career path. Where her previous release "Public Warning" had moments of arrogance, the new lead single, "So Human," demonstrates a newfound humility.

For an American hip-hop audience, "Public Warning" wasn't a "normal" sounding record by any means. "I know people were having trouble understanding me," she says. "It was fast and quite heavy.

GLOBALPULSE

EDITED BY TOM FERGUSON

>>>FRENCH CONNECTION

British singer/songwriter Charlie Winston is breaking through in France with "Hobo," which was released digitally Jan. 16 and physically Jan. 26. Real World Productions licensed the album to the Paris-based indie Atmosphereiques, and the label says it has shipped 50,000 units in France, peaking at No. 2. "Hobo," is a collection of blues, soul and pop songs written by Winston and published by Real World Works.

"France was a likely place to launch his career, because people are less influenced by trends there," says manager Adham Hunt of London- and Los Angeles-based instinct Artist Management.

The response from media has been instantaneous," says Atmosphereiques managing director Marc Thonn, who also handled A&R for "Hobo." Five of the tracks are rerecorded versions of songs from Winston's 2007 debut album, demos, "Make Way," which was issued by Real World without physical distribution to retail and mainly sold at concerts.

As well as supporting Real World founder Peter Gabriel in Europe, Winston toured as the opening act of his brother Tom Baxter in the United Kingdom and Ireland in 2007 and 2008. Eighteen headline shows are scheduled between March and June in France, Belgium and Switzerland, booked by Paris-based Chris...
Lady Sovereign is lining up TV synths, as well as exclusive deals with the forthcoming Electronic Arts videogames "Fight Night Round 4" and "Need for Speed Shift." She also partnered with Hot Topic, with the popular retail chain carrying her merchandise and accessories, as well as serving as a venue for in-store promotional tours.

"We have managed to make a small budget go a long way," says her manager and label co-owner Zak Biddulph. "The label will be paid for on its success, so we don't want to live off more than we can chew. But if her new album is successful, it will open more doors for the label."

Eventually, the label sees Lady Sovereign moving into a producer role for the acts that emerge on Midget. "We expect the audience, both in size and variety, to grow," Biddulph says. "But it will be a natural process."

As she describes her relationship with DefJam, and the potential it could have had to expand beyond a one-album deal, she doesn't sound bitter or jaded. Lady Sovereign emerged from the U.K. grime scene, a hip-hop style that is characterized by light, quick rhymes and beats borrowed from electronica acts and island influences. "Jigsaw" seems to be the ideal next step in that evolution.

"I'm really compulsive in music—I listen to everything, with my music, I can't make anything sound similar," she says. "It makes me sick. I can't do it."

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The "jigsaw" track "Let's Be Mates" relies in club-oriented dance grooves, and "Student Union" riffs on a more '80s synth-driven sound. The title track is a string-enhanced rock song, with a hint of balladry in the chorus.

World's Fair is managing Midget in the United States, as tel Martinet at Corida and co-produced by Atmospherique. "This is a big shift," Hunt says an international release is being discussed, with the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany targeted first.

--Amricons Pichevin

>>EVERYBODY,' EVERYWHERE

Muscovite DJ/producer Leonid Rudenko is set to follow the European success of Russian acts PPK and Tatu. Rudenko's "Everybody" (Data/Ministry of Sound) entered the U.K. singles chart at No. 24, Feb. 22 with sales of 10,500 copies, according to the Official Charts Co.

The buzz around the R&B dance tune began at the Amsterdam Dance Event last October, and "Everybody" received airplay on the national top 40 station Radio 1.

Rudenko's Netherlands-based manager Dick de Groot confirms that Ministry of Sound will also release the single in the United States and Mexico, with a date to be confirmed. The management company's label Be Yourself Music has licensed the track worldwide and there are also releases planned across Europe, as well as Russia, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. "I expect to see this track in the charts to top slots, I think it deserves it," Rudenko says.

The expectation is that the 23-year-old can build his career on this song. "Rudenko has just remixed a single by [Danish songwriter] Ida Corr and is working on new single material and an album," de Groot says.

The booking agent is London-based Jay Pidgeon Management, and "Everybody" is published by Bucks Music Group/Copyright Control.

--Vladimir Kozlov

NEW DIRECTION

Pop singer/songwriter Nek reached the Italian albums chart summit with his 10th album, "Un'altra Direzione," hitting No. 1 two weeks after its Jan. 30 release. Warner Music Italy reports sales of 70,000 and company president/CEO Massimo Giuliano is confident that "figure should grow considerably, as we plan to work this one for a year."

Its success has been driven by the single "La Voglia Che Non Vorrei," which reached the top five on Italy's Music Control radio airplay chart. Giuliano describes Nek as "a consolidated platinum and double-platinum artist who isn't feeling the recession."

He adds that the 37-year-old, who also has recorded in Spanish, "has always had a fan base abroad." The latest album was given a simultaneous release in Switzerland, "with Germany, Spain and Latin America to follow, while this time the French also seem very interested."

Nek (real name Filippo Nistri) is primarily published by his own Neviani Publishing company, along with Music Shape and Don't Worry; some songs on the album are shared with Warner/Chappell Music and Sony/ATV Publishing. The manager is Alfredo Cerutti of Italian-based Music Shape. Roberto de Luca of Live Nation handles Nek's live schedule. --Mark Worden

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Preaching with the choir: ISRAEL HOUGHTON

POWER PLAY

With iTunes And A World Tour, Israel Houghton Takes His Music To The Masses

Few artists cover diverse musical territory as effortlessly as Israel Houghton—a feat he attributes to "being a black kid who grew up in a white family in a Hispanic neighborhood." Those varied social and musical influences simmer on his forthcoming solo album, "The Power of One," which will be released March 24 on Integrity Music/Columbia Records.

The album's marketing plan is equally diverse. On March 10, Houghton will become the first gospel/Christian artist to have an iPhone app, which will be available for free at the iPhone App Store. The app will give users iTunes links to purchase "The Power of One," as well as Houghton's entire discography. iPhone users will also be able to listen to 30-second previews of every song on his previous six albums and have access to news from his Web site and blogs, YouTube videos, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and other content.

Houghton also is previewing his new album on the Hello Love Tour with Chris Tomlin. "We are really focused on now is actually a presale campaign on the road and through iTunes," says John Coleman, VP/GM of Integrity Label Group. "On the road, if you purchase a 'Power of One' T-shirt, you get an album download card, which allows you to download the 'Power of One' single immediately and then the album on street date."

Best-known for recording Grammy Award-winning live albums with his group New Breed, Houghton's new effort is a solo studio project, but he certainly didn't do it alone. In addition to an acclaimed group of session musicians, Houghton also recruited such special guests as TobyMac, who lent his vocals to the rocking "You Found Me," Mary Mary joins Houghton on the soulful ballad "Every Prayer," reggae vocalist Chevelle Franklin sings on "Surely Goodness" and joins Houghton and Delirious frontman Martin Smith on "Sing (Redemption's Song)."

Because of the album's musical diversity, Integrity plans to target multiple radio formats. "My Tribute" will be serviced to Christian AC radio and "Just Wanna Say" is climbing the Gospel Songs chart, where it is No. 27 this issue. "If it continues to track well at gospel, we'll be looking to see if it could be moved over to urban AC," Coleman says.

Houghton tours extensively and leads worship at Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church in Houston, attended by 42,000 people each weekend. "I'm still at Lakewood at least twice a month and traveling the rest of the time," he says.

And there will be no rest for the nonwicked. Houghton will finish the Tomlin tour in April and plans to embark on the Power of One tour later this year. He also has plans to tour abroad with dates already booked in Asia and South America. "We go to Africa probably four times a year—and this year is no exception," Houghton says.

For his part, Houghton always has his mind on how a song will sound live. "I want to come across is the passion and the desire that we have to get this message out," he says. "That was definitely our goal."
TIM MYERS

By the time he was 21, former OneRepublic bassist/songwriter Tim Myers had helped the band sell out the Avalon in Los Angeles, signed with Columbia and was one of the co-writers on “Stop and Stare,” which peaked at No. 12 on the Billboard Hot 100.

After all this success, he departed the band to try music on his own.

“That was definitely the best time in my life to have lived through that whole ‘I’m in a signed band, fake ID, nonstop party period. I’ve been there, done that, and now it’s out of my system,’ says Myers, now 25. “Now it’s hard for anybody to get me out of my work. I just love it.”

It’s safe to say this Californian singer/songwriter’s work is paying off. Due to a fruitful deal with Zync Music, Myers’ songs have been heard by millions of households, if only from his impressive licenses to Target commercials alone. His track “A Beautiful World” was part of the retailer’s campaign for eight months last year, and “Brand New Day” featuring Original Signal’s Lindsey Ray, which came after, is instantly recognizable.

Myers’ songs also have been heard in shows like “Grey’s Anatomy,” “Private Practice,” “Life of Ryan” and “One Tree Hill”; in ads for Canon, Nike and JC Penney; and in the films “The Water Horse” and “Hotel for Dogs.”

Last month, Myers announced a deal with Republic Project, a new interactive music marketing platform that will sell some of his songs online exclusively for less than six months. Fans who pre-order or purchase the music through the site will be treated to exclusive bonus features, like behind-the-scenes videos, unreleased songs and live chats. “There’s so many ways of getting heard and a lot of ways people can interact online. … [Republic Project] takes care of that for me so I don’t have to hire someone else to do it,” Myers says.

Myers’ last effort, “The Good Life,” is only sold at shows, but about 23,000 tracks from that set have been downloaded, according to Nielsen SoundScan. He is hard at work on his first solo full-length and has plenty of material to work with: He wrote and recorded 140 songs last year and keeps up with a schedule of writing around four songs per week.

While his own music keeps Myers working hard, he’s penned tracks for other acclaimed acts, such as Ty rone Wells, Mozella and Days Difference.

“I’m taking a position that I want to be around for 30 more years, so I want people to love my songs, just my songs,” Myers says. “They don’t need to love me, as a personality, so whether it’s for me or somebody else, I just love the music’s out there.”

Contact: Julie Snama, manager, julieshama@aol.com

MIDNIGHT MASSES

Seven years ago in Atlanta, Autry Rene Fulbright witnessed “one of the most explosive moments in my life. I still remember what clothes I was wearing.” He refers to when he first saw … And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead perform. He bonded with Trail of Dead drummer Jason Reece after the show.

Fast forward, and in March 2008, that friendship blossomed into Midnight Masses, a collaboration between the two musicians. Reuniting at South by Southwest (SXSW) in Austin, Reece and Fulbright found some recording equipment and managed to lay down two songs in 45 minutes.

To build on that chemistry, the pair filled out Midnight Masses by roping in friends Destiny Montague from Fulbright’s other band, Shock Cinema; Santigold’s touring guitarist Eric Rodgers; Roger Sisters’ Miyuki Furtado; and singer Giselle Reiber.

TV on the Radio’s Gerard Smith and Trail of Dead frontman Conrad Keedy will co-produce Midnight Masses’ debut full-length, due later this year, and helped on the band’s first 7-inch, “Heaven,” due digitally March 10. (“Heaven” is also sold on tour as the Brooklyn-based band supports Trail of Dead on its national stint.)

“Heaven” is an appropriate title for such an enlightening, beautifully lush set, with waxy guitars and dozens of vocals, recalling acts like Spiritualized. Fulbright attests that this, and Midnight Masses on the whole, is the result of tragedy turned inspiration. His father—a minister and fanatical music fan—passed away just prior to last year’s SXSW, and from that emotional outpouring came lyrical passion and cathartic performances.

“I liken it to sticking your hand in a thorny bush to get to a treasure. It literally hurts to explore his death and to direct that onto a stage,” Fulbright says. “But singing it all together has made it a much more unifying and moving experience.”

Contact: Robbie Mackey, manager, robbie@onesevensevensix.com

BLACK VIOLIN

Neither Kev Marcus nor Will-B fit the profile of a typical violinist. Marcus was pushed to play the instrument by a mother worried he’d get into trouble.

As for Will-B, a security guard in high school suggested he pick up an instrument after he was caught beating on lunchroom tables. “He said, ‘Stop doing that. Sign up for band or something.’ So I signed up for band, but instead I ended up in orchestra playing the violin,” Will-B says.

While in college in their home state of Florida, the two decided to officially join forces and start performing as a duo, backed by their DJ TK. Playing anything from Mozart to Jay-Z over mainly hip-hop beats, they performed in their local scene.

In the meantime they’d sent a performance tape to the Apollo Theater for consideration, and a year-and-a-half later, the venue rang. “We flew in and won the Apollo Legendary Award,” Marcus says. “Apollo was like a validation for us.”

Work quickly began to come in afterward. Black Violin performed with Alicia Keys at the 2004 Billboard Music Awards, opened for Lloyd Banks and Lil Wayne on tour and backed Linkin Park’s Mike Shinoda on a world tour.

Recently Black Violin returned from overseas, where it performed on a military tour in Germany, stopping in Amsterdam with Common, Prague with Wu Tang Clan and Switzerland with Jay-Z. Starting March 13, it will perform a brief residency at the New Victory Theater in New York’s Time Square. The act is also prepping the release of its currently untitled sophomore album.

“We’re trying to conquer the world, whether it’s 20,000 people in Dubai or a bunch of kids at a college cafeteria,” Marcus says. “We want to affect change in people. We’re just blessed to be able to perform.”

Contact: Jeremiah “Ice” Younossi, manager, ice@alistagency.com

VIDEOS: For an exclusive performance and interview with Black Violin, go to billboard.com/blackviolin.

CATCHING UP WITH UNDERGROUND ALUMNI

Lay Low has been signed by Nettwerk Music Group, which will release her album “Farewell Good Night’s Sleep” May 26. … Lu Rios has earned two nominations for the 2009 Latin Billboard Music Awards.
ALBUMS

ROCK

NEW FOUND GLORY
Not Without a Fight
Producer: Mark Hoppus
Release Date: March 10
New Found Glory goes into its eighth studio album, “Not Without a Fight,” with its dudes understandably up. The Florida quintet parted with Geffen Records after 2006’s “Coming Home” and spent the intervening years revisiting its favorite film soundtrack songs (“From the Screen to Your Stereo Part II”) and having some fun with its alter ego international Superheroes of Hardcore (“Tip of the Iceberg/Takin’ It Ova”). So the stakes are high as the group’s Epi-taph debut seeks to re-establish it as the band that reeled off three consecutive gold albums earlier in the decade. With Blink-182/+4 bassist Mark Hoppus producing, “Fight” does pack a wallop, enveloping frontman Jordan Pundik’s angsty relationship paens on a dozen compact, dynamic and hooky tracks in mere 35 minutes. The full-on “This Isn’t You” and the ringing, tuneful “Tangled Up” are the standouts, but NFG also scores with the galloping “Listen to Your Friends,” the rhythmic punch of “Don’t Let Her Pull You Down,” the twisting guitar signature in “I’ll Never Love Again” and the rich acoustic-electric mix of “Reasons.”—GG

CURSIVE
Mama, I’m Swollen
Producers: Cursive, AJ Mogis
Saddle Creek
Release Date: March 10
Cursive has never been a band to rest on its laurels, opting to shake things up. In effort to craft their next album, “Drive a Stake Through the Heart of All the Lyrical Mis-tica!,” to the conceptual masterpiece “The Ugly Organ” and 2006’s wildy bombastic “Happy Hollow.” On “Mama, I’m Swollen,” the band revisits the darker, aggres-sive rock of its early career, matched with the bigger production values of later albums. Bright horns and organ live up the rous-ing chorus of “I Couldn’t Love You Anymore,” sax bursts carry along the jaunty tune of “Caveman,” while the pun-ishing “In the Now” and drum-heavy title track find Cursive rocking out at its best. Lyrical-ly, frontman Tim Kasher never misses a step (see the men-as-animals of instruments with its true heritage in beautiful complementary collaborations. From the call and response of “Tulipanita” with the Naksen! Women’s Group, to the multigenerational energy of “Zawose” with the Zawose Family, to the closing banjo/kalimba “duel” between Fleck and Anania Ngiagia, Fleck’s celebrated skills melt into each song with humility. “Throw Down Your Heart” is a rare and refreshing demon-stration that music’s ability to bridge cultural divides is genuinely something more than a cliché.—EN

KELLY CLARKSON
All I Ever Wanted
Producers: various
Release Date: March 10
If the lollipop-licking sleeve didn’t make it clear, the tense opening strains of the first single, “My Life Would Suck Without You,” should do it: Kelly Clarkson is back in the pop fold, which is right where she belongs. “All I Ever Wanted” shows a lighter-hearted, but more vocal-ly mature Clarkson than her last outing, 2006’s “My December.” Tracks like “Suck” and “Don’t Let Me Stop You” promote the high-power guitars and bell-like altos for which she’s best known, while “Don’t Even Think About It” continues the hook out of two tunes co-written by Katy Perry. “I Don’t Hook Up” and “Long Shot,” give unexpected paths to lines like “My heartbeat beats me senselessly.” The ballads are more memorable too, like “Cry” and the kick drum-driven “Already Gone,” which she delivers with a ghostliness reminiscent of Sinéad O’Connor. Clarkson’s always had the bouncy yell in the business. But now she’s becoming a masterful interpreter too.—KM

MADELEINE PEYROUX
Bare Bones
Producer: Larry Klein
Rounder
Release Date: March 10
“Bare Bones” could do double duty as both title and business plan for Madeleine Peyroux’s third set of dusky, darkly cool music. It’s a cover-free collection co-written by Peyroux and cut mostly live and with a minimum of background fussiness. The title track, for instance, features an organ line that sounds like it’s almost apologizing for its presence. Peyroux’s charms remain well-tailored to devotees of coffee-shop comfort — her new “Backes” — “Instead” even promotes a want-you-got-message: “(Instead of feeling low, remember, you’re never on your own)” that goes down with surprising smoothness. “Bones” contains plenty of her late-nighthour song-choice wanderings as well, including deliciously dirty piano-bar shuffles (the jaunty “You Can’t Do Me”), co-written with Steely Dan’s Walter Becker), the finely crafted narrative “River of Tears” (“He could sit and drink the way a monk could pray”) and the strictly gorgeous “Our Lady of Pigalle.” All sound pretty wonderful in the hands of Peyroux’s stealthy, silk-draped vocals, delivered with a winning air of slightly detached mystery.—JV

MELISSA GREENE
Benefit of Doubt
Producers: Pam Gadd, Nancy Gardener
Home Sweet Highway Productions
Release Date: March 10
Pam Gadd is an accomplished musician and vocalist whose history includes time spent with the New Coon Creek Girls as well as the Grammy Award-nominated female band Wild Rose. Her latest solo set is sure to excite a broad audience from bluegrass aficionados to country music lovers. Her clear, pretty voice oozes warmth and charm, especially on such heart-tugging tracks as “Until She Makes It Home,” which also showcases Gadd’s gifts as a songwriter. “Farewell Wagon Master” is a poignant tribute to the late Porter Wag-on, with whom Gadd often performed and recorded. Marty Raybon joins Gadd for a compelling cover of Conway Twitty/Loretta Lynn hillbilly classic “After the Fire Is Gone” and gets spirited assistance on Dolly Parton’s beloved “Applejack” from Parton herself. The special guests—including bluegrass diva Dale Ann Bradley—are enjoyable, but Gadd needs no help in delivering a totally entertainging album.—DEP

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THE DREAM
Love Vs. Money
Producers: Christopher “Tricky” Stewart, Los Da Maestro
Radio Killa/Def Jam
Release Date: March 10
The Dream has definitely bypassed the sophomore slump with “Love Vs. Money.” The songwriter-cum-singer pushes the envelope production-wise (incorporating more of his Prince influences, among others) as well as lyrically: Check out “Sweat It Out,” which finds him crooning over a thumping bassline about a woman sweating out her hair after steamy sex. While sex is a recurring theme throughout the album (“Put It Down,” “Let Me See That Booty,” “Kelly’s 12 Play”), the-Dream also taps into raw emotions on tracks like “Love Vs. Money” and “Love Vs. Money Pt. 2,” which are all about a collective version of “Nikki.” On “I’m a Scorned One” he self-consciously belts lyrics like, “I should’ve known money couldn’t match love” over pulsating beats.—MC

BELA FLECK
Throw Down Your Heart: Tales From the Acoustic Planet, Vol. 3—Africa Sessions
Producer: Béla Fleck
Rounder
Release Date: March 3
Béla Fleck could probably make a fine living doing this things as the world’s foremost banjo virtuoso in jazz and bluegrass circles forever—which is only one reason his modest journey to dis-cover instrument’s African roots is so satisfying. As the album component of Sascha Paladino’s 2008 documentary of the same name, “Throw Down Your Heart” features Fleck with musicians from Uganda, Tanzania, Camb-odia and Mali, reuniting this supposedly most American

WORLD
JAZZ

TERRENCE BREWER
Groovin’ Wes
Producer: Terrence Brewer String Band
Release Date: March 3
Bay Area guitarist Terrence Brewer works a fine tribute to jazz icon Wes Montgomery on his latest disc. Brewer takes the trio approach, and it’s a particularly sweet configuration. The guitarist is joined by Will Blades on Hammond B3 and Micah McClain on drums. An early highlight is Brewer’s arrangement of “Bumpin’ on Sunset.” His guitar work is fluent and his feel for the groove is unerring. “Here’s That Rainy Day” evokes a romantic sensibility, enhanced by Blades’ moody B3 solo. “Bumpin’ is soulful, more downtempo than “Bumpin’ on Sunset,” and as such is really an ideal vehicle for Brewer. He un-winds an extended, multicolored solo that’s particularly engaging.—PVV

TIERNY SUTTON BAND
Desire
Producer: Elaine Martone Telarc
Release Date: March 3
This is one of vocalist Tierny Sutton’s best albums, a success on a number of levels: Sutton’s vocal work is splendid, her band is in the pocket, and the arrangements are challenging. On the opener “It’s Only a Paper Moon,” Sutton’s vocal is ethereal, more insinuated than sung, and the arrangement is equally elusive. “Long Daddy Green,” a famed vehicle for Blossom Dearie, highlights Sutton sailing on the vaguely ominous arrangement, thriving on the tension between the clarity of her voice and the paradoxical lyrics. Sutton’s cover of “Fever” embodies the album title. The arrangement is deliciously minimal—just drummer Ray Brinker, bassist Troy Henry and Sutton’s smoldering vocal. “Cry Me a River” is animated by a dark arrangement that embraces the bitter quality of the tale. Sutton’s singing sounds very much alive to the irony of the lyric.—PVV

R&B

J. HOLIDAY
Round 2
Producers: Various Capitol Records
Release Date: March 10
While certain R&B bigwigs attempt to get their personal lives in order in hopes of reclaiming their musical territory, R&B newcomer J. Holiday is quietly filling the void for baby-making music with his sophomore set. On “Lights Go Out,” the Washington, D.C., crooner belts lyrics like, “There’s no more talking/no more teasing/nothing but pleasing” over a pulsating beat. “Sing 2 You,” the ode to the ’90s R&B quartet Jodeci, finds Holiday enamoring a lady over buzzing guitar riffs. “Turn up the radio so you can yell as loud as you want,” he proposes on the piano-based “Make That Sound,” while boasting about pleasing a woman on the Rick-Ross-assisted “Worth Love.” While ballads like “Forever Ain’t Enough,” as well as the poverty-driven “Homeless,” round out the set, it’s clear that the steamier songs will get what they want from the album, which requires a must-have.—MC

SINGLES

SHONTELL FEATURING AKON
Stick With Each Other
Producers: Rodney Jenkins, Evan Rogers, Carl Sturken
Writer: D. Warren
Publisher: RealSongs, ASCAP Universal Motown
Shontelle was studying to be an attorney until management allies of pal Rihanna in Barbados convinced her to pursue songs instead of subpoenas. Score, considering how much the 23-year-old single debut single “T-Shirt,” which reached top 40’s top 15, No. 1 at R&B and No. 2 at dance. The follow-up “Stick With You” re- veals the singer as a formidable talent who’s on top of her game; her sparse, million-selling, piano calls upon a who’s who of vocalists to lend the call, such as Martina McBride, Donna Osmond, Olivia Newton-John, Lady Antebellum and Ronnie McDonald. But make no mistake: This guy is in charge of the enduring melodies that long ago propelled him past his “new age” persona. “Never Far Away” engages R&B roots of pop, whose “Linda” was Christian AC’s most-played song in 2007, and appears on the act’s current CD “Wonder of the World.” This version anchors the career-spanning “Ultimate Love Songs: The Very Best of Jim Brickman,” issued by Time Life, which includes four new tracks. With the muto Piano on piano, the medtempo pop/rock lyrical honors the Fools’ wives as lead singer Wes Willis and the band persistently tour. AC needed no convincing to indulge; in two months “Never” is dashing up the playlist. Brickman scores another coup, as his under-stated fortitude promises another 15-year command of the airwaves.—CT

MILEY CYRUS
The Climb (3:58)
Producer: John Shanks
Writers: J. Alexander, J. Mabe
Publishers: Vistawall/ Hopeless Rose, ASCAP, Music of Stage Three/Mate It Big, BMI
Wait Disney/Hollywood
After building an empire on Disney’s “Hannah Montana,” Miley Cyrus is putting kid stuff aside. “The Climb” is her bid for vocal credibility, with a mature ballad (though ironically, the song is featured in the new “Hannah Montana” movie). Produced with grandeur by John Shanks, it features an inspiring lyric about life’s struggles: “Always gonna be another mountain, sometimes I’m gonna lose my balance.” It’s the climb.” The track is also Cyrus’ first push for country acceptance, following the 2008 pop hits “7 Things” and “See You Again”—much like cross-format pal Taylor Swift. Among previous bids to be taken seriously—really, on any front—Cyrus successfully transitions here from lunchbox icon to lauded artist.—CT

TRIPLE A

CHRIS ISAAK
We Let Her Down (3:21)
Producer: Eric Van Royce
Writer: C. Isak
Publisher: C. Isak, ASCAP
Response/Warner Bros.
Chris Isaak must be consi- dered on the verge of 25 years, he has but a single top 40 calling card 1991’s “Wicked Game.” The persistently po- tential songwriter/singer is now starring in his own Bio- graphy Channel series, “The Chris Isaak Hour,” a music in- terview and performance show branded as “Inside the Actors Studio” for acts, including the likes of Trisha Yearwood, Stevie Nicks, Chicago, Glen Campbell and Michael Buble. Accom- panying “Mr. Lucky,” Isak’s first studio album since 2002 is, “We Let Her Down,” which, melodically and harmonically, is an engaging romp, but lyrically it’s a disturbing story about a woman whose fate is in question. “I told her ‘I love you’ but that’s too late, I see her, but what?” What in the world will it take to convince radio that Isak is relevant? Oh, that’s right, TV is the new radio. Never mind then, F.M.—CT

THE SCRIPT
The Man Who Can’t Be Moved (4:00)
Producers: Danny O'Donnoghue, Mark Sheehan, Steve Easter, Andrew Frampton
Writers: M. Sheehan, D. O’Donoghue
Publisher: not listed
Epic
U.S. radio is fickle when it comes to other countries’ shin- ing stars: indulge another paint-by-numbers rapper or chance innovation that requires some sweat to break. Rest easy. First, the Script arrives in the States with a sure-fire success story as the best-selling new band of 2008 in the United Kingdom and Ireland, a No. 1 album, and a World Music Award. But more so, launch single “The Man Who Can’t Be Moved,” which is already a smash in a dozen nations, possesses an easy, breezy vibe, a driving melody packed with one monster hook after another and a clever lyric about a dude impatiently waiting for redemption from his lady: “If you’re missing me, thinking you’ll come back to the place we’d met/Gonna camp in my sleeping bag, I’m not gonna move.” Lead singer Danny O’Donoghue is awfully dapper, destined to charm the pants off top 40’s female demo. The Script’s self-titled album is due March 17—from the same label that ably broke Adele. Programmers, if you’re not moved by the Script, kindly turn in your FCC license. You’re simply not serving the public interest.—CT

THE BILLBOARD REVIEWS
Being Human

Somalian MC K’Naan Turns His Personal Struggles Into Revealing Rhyme

Some rappers rhyme about their hard-knock lives to get street cred. But for 31-year-old Somalian-born K’Naan Warsame, who performs as K’Naan, writing about his war-torn childhood was therapeutic.

"I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, and my mother decided not to put me on medication because we didn’t trust Western medicine," says the MC, who was raised in Toronto. "So I spent a lot of time in my room alone, writing, focused on trying to get out internal issues I was dealing with, including having survived war, leaving my people behind, the disconnect of having a new scenario and being a black African immigrant in North America, among other things."

These are just some of the topics K’Naan dealt with on his 2005 independent, Juno Award-winning album, "The Dusty Foot Philosopher.

K’Naan’s "Wavin’ Flag," with its anthem-like call to "spread the love" to war-torn countries, has become an international hit, topping the charts in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, among others.

"I used music to assist with my personal struggles. "There was always a playwright and poets around the house," he says. "There was also anti-music—songs of hidden political criticisms and messages about the dictatorship and the war." It was his family’s discord with the Somalian government that prompted K’Naan’s mother to petition the U.S. embassy for visas. In 1991, on the final day the embassy remained open, the visas were approved and they boarded the last commercial flight out of the country.

K’Naan and his family relocated to Harlem, joining his father who had emigrated years before and worked as a cab driver. Due to "immigration difficulties for those seeking asylum as refugees," K’Naan says, they eventually settled in Toronto—but not before he discovered the power of rap.

"There were many stages of discovery for me, but one was when I heard ‘New York State of Mind’ by Nas," he says. "It showed me it was possible to be real descriptive and that not all music was just get-up music. I figured if he could do it with his Queensbridge (housing project) childhood, I could be visual about the African slum experience."

And that’s just what K’Naan did on "Troubadour," which he describes as "humane music. It’s about the conditions of humanity rather than politics."

K’Naan’s "Wavin’ Flag" enters Hot Digital Songs at No. 68. Recorded at Bob Marley’s Tuff Gong Studio after a personal invitation from his sons Damian and Stephen, other titles on the set include the singles "ABC" and "If Rap Gets Jealous," "Bang Bang," "Running Manoo's Adam Levine," and "Dreamer," for which a viral video was released recently.

Dramatic Metallica's "Kirk Hammett," Mos Def and Chieli Zua also appear on the album. Producers Track & Field helmed the project.

Growing up in a musically inclined family—his aunt, Magool, was a Somalian singer and his grandfather was a poet—it’s little surprise that K’Naan would use music to assist with his personal struggles. "There was always a playwright and poets around the house," he says. "There was also anti-music—songs of hidden political criticisms and messages about the dictatorship and the war."

METAL GEAR SOLID

While it has been touring Japan this week, thrash-metal group Lamb of God has been quite active stateside, securing a No. 2 slot on the Billboard 200. The Richmond, Va., five-piece’s fifth album, "Wrath," moved 68,000 copies its first week, according to Nielsen SoundScan—an impressive feat for any group these days, much less a heavy metal act.

This marks the Epic band’s highest debut. In 2006, its Grammy Award-nominated "Sacrament" reached No. 8 and has sold 292,000 copies, landing atop the Top Rock Albums chart in the process.

To offset “Wrath’s" leaking in early February, Epic bolstered the physical options with album stems—which can be used for do-it-yourself remixes—and a deluxe option that featured a USB stick containing digital files, album stems and bonus tracks. Also included within the first 100,000 copies is a redemption code that listeners can enter online; prizes for 100 winners include trips to see Lamb of God in the United Kingdom, singing with the group at a sound check and guitar lessons.

The new album’s marketing campaign launched in December when Lamb of God supported Metallica for two weeks.

"Metal fans have great pride and want a band like Lamb of God to win," says Epic VP of marketing Scott Greer. "Judging from the reaction and calls I’m getting from people around the metal community, that’s certainly the case. Especially in this economic climate, this debut is a big statement by the band, a huge week for the metal genre and a huge win for Epic."

Lamb of God will return stateside for touring duty starting April 2, playing midsize theaters and clubs in North America.

—Michael D. Ayers
THE ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS

Jesse McCartney's latest single poses the question, "How Do You Sleep?" Given the singer/songwriter's busy schedule, it would seem he isn't getting much of that these days.

Having recently filmed a five-episode arc on ABC Family's "Greek," the Hollywood Records artist is criss-crossing the country on a major-market club tour. On April 7, Hollywood will release the bonus edition of McCartney's 2008 album "Departure." Sporting a new cover and different artwork, "Departure: Recharged" also includes four new tracks co-written by McCartney: "Body Language," "Oxygen," "In My Veins" and "Crash and Burn." Listing for the same $18.98 price tag as its predecessor, the 16-track bonus edition is racking up strong pre-release buzz thanks to the "How Do You Sleep?" remix featuring Ludacris. The track advances this week 22-21 on the Mainstream Top 40 chart and 39-37 on the Billboard Hot 100.

Marking McCartney's first foray into contemporary R&B, the original "Departure" sold more than 2.5 million copies (1.5 million) and with "How Do You Sleep?" its fifth rock chart entry, McCartney has already sold 1.9 million units. The bonus edition "... has sold 1.6 million downloads, according to Nielsen SoundScan, the album didn't fare as well. To date, it has sold only 175,000 units."

"Despite the single's success, the album hasn't sold the way it should," says Ken Bunt, senior VP of marketing at Hollywood. "But in finding his groove with this album, Jesse has continued writing and recording new songs. So we thought it would be a good time to reissue the album, especially since the remix is rolling the way we hoped." The label is working two versions of the video for "Sleep"—one is a live version culled from McCartney radio performances dating back to last December. The second world-premiered March 3 on MySpace for a three-day exclusive. Adding more promotional fuel to the fire is McCartney's role on "Greek"—his arc debuts March 30 and ends in April. Show promos are already up and running, using the live version of the "Sleep" video. "...isn't the single "Be OK," featuring Will.i.am, won the 2009 Grammy Award for Best Urban/Alternative Performance. Having sued her former manager, DJ Mialis "Biggs" Ellison, for embezzlement and harassment last year (the lawsuit is still in motion), Michele is now managed by her mother. She's also teaming with Nuvo, the maker of a pink-hued sparkling liqueur. The company will sponsor the singer's after-parties when she goes on tour. In the meantime, Michele hopes to eventually team up musically with contemporaries Jennifer Hudson and Fantasia. "Before it was like, 'Where do I fit in? Like it was the first day of school,'" Michele says. "But this time I have so much more love around me." —Gail Mitchell

**SWEET DREAMS**

"How Do You Sleep?" has earned McCartney a number of accolades, including a Grammy Award nomination for Best Pop Collaboration with Vocals. "I've never won a Grammy before, and to be nominated for one is huge," he says. "I'm really excited about it." The song also helped McCartney score a Top 10 hit on the Billboard Hot 100, where it spent 10 weeks. Last week, the track hit No. 1 on Hot 100 Airplay, the group's best showing on that chart. "Hell" also has a commanding presence in the digital world. So far in 2009 it has shifted 1.4 million copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan, making it the third-biggest download of the year behind Lady Ga Ga's "Just Dance" (1.9 million) and Flo Rida's "Right Round" (1.4 million). Since last year, "Hell" digital downloads total 1.9 million.

The song appears on AAR's third album, the December release "When the World Comes Down" (interscope), which has sold 304,000, according to SoundScan. The group's 2005 sophomore set, "Move Along," sold 2 million.

"I think the way people are consuming music now, it's changing the way we make albums," McCartney says. "People are more willing to pay for an album, even if it's just one song. So we wanted to make sure that the songs we put out were really good. We wanted to make sure people would buy it."
JoBros' Altered Expectations; 'Slumdog' Barks

Oh, JoBros, where art thou?

A week ago, we thought the Jonas Brothers' soundtrack to its "3D Concert Experience" film was all but a lock for a No. 1 debut on the Billboard 200.

Color us surprised that the trio's set misses the top slot and it's not even the chart's top debut this week.

That distinction goes to the metal band Lamb of God, which bows at No. 2 with " Wrath" (68,000). It's the act's best sales week as well as a new chart peak. "3D" debuts at No. 3 with 50,000.

On the Nielsen SoundScan Building chart released Feb. 25, the soundtrack was No. 3 with nearly 16,000 in unweighted sales through the close of business Feb. 24. At that point, Lamb of God was ahead of the group at No. 2, with slightly more than 23,000.

So why didn't we conclude that '3D' wouldn't debut at No. 1?

Billboard estimates that the seven merchants that report to Nielsen SoundScan's Building chart—Stans World Entertainment, Best Buy, iTunes, Starbucks, Borders, Target and Anderson Merchandisers—comprise about 60% of all U.S. album sales.

So while the Building chart gives a good reflection of what's happening in the overall marketplace, you can't always call a winner just by glancing at the early returns.

On Feb. 25, informed industry types thought that the album's sales would grow over the weekend—thanks to what was shaping up to be a blockbuster film debut—and eventually sell enough to start at No. 1, perhaps with as much as 90,000. Two days later, that sales projection was revised downward.

What took most observers by surprise—and perhaps affected soundtrack sales—was the relative softness of the film's opening weekend. The much-hyped movie bowed Feb. 27 on 1,500 screens at 1,271 venues in the United States and Canada and earned a respectable, but not spectacular, $12.5 million.

Had the movie opened to bigger numbers, it's likely the album's sales would have increased over the weekend as originally expected, thus resulting in a bigger first week. And, well, most folks assumed that the movie was bound to rake in big dough.

Why? Everyone had been comparing the flick to last year's " Hannah Montana/Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds Concert" film, which earned an opening weekend of $31.1 million from just 683 theaters.

It's a natural enough comparison.

Both Miley Cyrus and the Jonas Brothers mingle in the same tween territory and come from the World of Disney.

But clearly there was something about Cyrus' film that was more alluring to audiences.

Perhaps it was how her concert movie came on the heels of a crazily-in-demand sold-out concert tour? It gave fans an out of the live show a chance to see Cyrus in another setting.

On the other hand, of the 43 Jonas Brothers concerts reported to Billboard Boxscore since July 2008, only 29 were sellouts. Both the word " only" isn't entirely accurate, since the group sold 95% of the available tickets (697,572 out of 733,723).

Speaking of Cyrus, it was nearly a year ago when the companion album to her concert film debuted on the Billboard 200. The set—released a month after the film premiered—began its life as a Wal-Mart exclusive and bowed at No. 10 with 34,000 on the March 29, 2008, chart, eventually peaking at No. 3.

"Millionaire" Moves: At least one thing we projected last week comes true: The "Slumdog Millionaire" soundtrack flies up the Billboard 200, reaching a new peak at No. 4 (44,000; up 109%).

The album's move comes as a result of feeling the full impact of the film's eight Academy Award wins Feb. 22.

This week, digital downloads accounted for 22,000 of its overall haul, or slightly more than 50% of its weekly sum. So far, 57% of the album's cumulative sales are from downloads.

"Slumdog" is also the second-best-selling digital album of the year so far, with 96,000 copies. Only the Fray's self-titled sophomore set is ahead, with 128,000.

www.americanradiohistory.com
**TOP POP CATALOG**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Original Chart Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ABBA</td>
<td>Waterloo</td>
<td>1974/05/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Queen</td>
<td>Bohemian Rhapsody</td>
<td>1975/06/23</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Michael Jackson</td>
<td>Thriller</td>
<td>1983/11/30</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Michael Jackson</td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>1987/10/03</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Whitney Houston</td>
<td>I Will Always Love You</td>
<td>1992/06/06</td>
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<td>AC/DC</td>
<td>Highway to Hell</td>
<td>1979/12/13</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Fleetwood Mac</td>
<td>Dreams</td>
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<td>Bon Jovi</td>
<td>Livin' on a Prayer</td>
<td>1986/03/29</td>
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<td>The Eagles</td>
<td>Hotel California</td>
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<td>Hey Jude</td>
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<td>The Eagles</td>
<td>Take It Easy</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Bruce Springsteen</td>
<td>Born to Run</td>
<td>1975/08/15</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Whitney Houston</td>
<td>I Wanna Dance With Somebody</td>
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<td>Take It Easy</td>
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**TOP DIGITAL**

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<td>We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together</td>
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<td>Adele</td>
<td>Someone Like You</td>
<td>2011/11/21</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Ariana Grande</td>
<td>Ariana Grande: Live At The Hollywood Bowl</td>
<td>2019/07/02</td>
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<td>Someone Like You</td>
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<td>Grenade</td>
<td>2010/01/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
<td>Shake It Off</td>
<td>2014/08/05</td>
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<td>Bad Guy</td>
<td>2019/11/29</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Sorry</td>
<td>2015/05/16</td>
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<td>Shape of You</td>
<td>2017/01/06</td>
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<td>Dua Lipa</td>
<td>Don't Start Now</td>
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<td>Rare</td>
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<td>Toby Keith</td>
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<td>I CAN'T MAKE YOU LOVE ME</td>
<td>Darius Rucker</td>
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<td>Kenny Chesney, Mark McEntire</td>
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<td>MCA</td>
<td>CAPITOL NASHVILLE</td>
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<td>Brooks &amp; Dunn</td>
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<td>George Strait</td>
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<td>FEEL THAT FIRE</td>
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<td>I DON'T THINK I CAN'T LOVE YOU</td>
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<td>I TOLD YOU SO</td>
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### TOP COUNTRY ALBUMS

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<td>Great Country Hits</td>
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<td>JASON ALDRED</td>
<td>Night Train</td>
<td></td>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>04/06</td>
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<td>JAMES(costume)</td>
<td>True Country</td>
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<td>MCA</td>
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<td>The Boys of Fall</td>
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Data for week of MARCH 14, 2009 | For chart reprints call 646.654.4633 | Go to www.billboard.biz for complete chart data
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<td>A Different Me</td>
<td>Keyshia Cole</td>
<td>Interscope</td>
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<td>Rites &amp; Heartbreak</td>
<td>Kanye West</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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<td>India.Arie</td>
<td>Republic</td>
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<td>Beanie Sigel</td>
<td>Motown</td>
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<td>Goodie Mob</td>
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<td>Universal</td>
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<td>Ne-Yo</td>
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<td>MUSIQ Soulchild</td>
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<td>Ryan Leslie</td>
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<td>Disciple</td>
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### MAINSTREAM R&B/HIP-HOP

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<td>Kanye West</td>
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<tr>
<td>1234</td>
<td>Just Like Me</td>
<td>50 Cent</td>
<td>Shady/Roc-A-Fela</td>
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<td>1234</td>
<td>BEAP</td>
<td>Beanie Sigel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1234</td>
<td>Evolver</td>
<td>Lil Wayne</td>
<td>Cash Money</td>
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<tr>
<td>1234</td>
<td>The Recession</td>
<td>Young Jeezy</td>
<td>Top Dawg</td>
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<td>1234</td>
<td>Brass Knuckles</td>
<td>Nelly</td>
<td>Def Jam</td>
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### ADULT R&B

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<td>Mary Mary</td>
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<td>Here I Stand</td>
<td>Jennifer Lopez</td>
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<td>The Sweetest Love</td>
<td>Ne-Yo</td>
<td>Maybach</td>
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<td>God's Greatest</td>
<td>Ludacris</td>
<td>Capitol</td>
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<td>Chocolate High</td>
<td>Akon</td>
<td>Bad Boy</td>
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<td>It's Not That Simple</td>
<td>Cassie</td>
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<td>Spotlight</td>
<td>Missy Elliot</td>
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<td>1234</td>
<td>Heaven Sent</td>
<td>Beyoncé</td>
<td>Jay-Z</td>
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<td>1234</td>
<td>Nothing Left To Say</td>
<td>Kelly Rowland</td>
<td>Interscope</td>
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<td>Playa Cardz Right</td>
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<td>You're The Only One</td>
<td>Missy Elliot</td>
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<td>I Need A Love Song</td>
<td>Marsha Ambrosius</td>
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### RHYTHMIC

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<td>Pop Champagne</td>
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<td>Whatever You Like</td>
<td>Stalley</td>
<td>Money Maker</td>
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<td>One More Drink</td>
<td>TQ</td>
<td>Universal</td>
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<td>Move If You Wanna</td>
<td>R. Kelly</td>
<td>RCA</td>
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<td>Want It, Need It</td>
<td>MJB</td>
<td>Universal</td>
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<td>I Get It In</td>
<td>CA$H</td>
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### ARTIST

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<td>Atlantic</td>
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<td>Troutador</td>
<td>J. Cole</td>
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<td>Something Else</td>
<td>Snoop Dogg</td>
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<td>Here I Stand</td>
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<td>G Unit</td>
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<td>Right Round</td>
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<td>Crayons</td>
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<td>The Game</td>
<td>Akon</td>
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<td>A Horse For Christmas</td>
<td>Plies</td>
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<td>1234</td>
<td>The Ballads</td>
<td>Jamie Foxx</td>
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EXECUTIVE TURNTABLE

Send submissions to: exec@billboard.com

RECORD COMPANIES: Sony Music Entertainment Asia names Daniel DiCicco president, effective April 1. He was president/representative director at BMG Japan.

EMI Music North America appoints Gary Beech senior VP of urban marketing. He held the same role at Sony Music Entertainment.

PUBLISHING: Warner/Chappell Music names Tracy Gershon senior VP/head of A&R in Nashville. She was VP of A&R at Warner Bros. Records Nashville.

TOURING: Live Nation appoints four executives across its global music division. Brian Yost becomes president of on-site products, John Rostas becomes president of global venues, Seth Matlin becomes global chief marketing officer, and Robert Peters becomes chief strategic officer. Yost was VP of development/corporate officer at Harrah’s Entertainment, Rostas was a principal at Touch Worldwide, Matlin worked in a similar role at Creative Artists Agency, and Peters served in the same capacity under the company’s corporate division.

APA taps four new booking agents: Tom Hoppa (Los Angeles), Nicholas Trusty (New York), Steve Holberg and Clint Whiley (both in Nashville). Hoppa was an agent at TKO; Trusty worked in the office of APA agent Christine Barkley; and Holberg and Whiley were agents at Third Coast Artist Agency.

Facility management firm Global Spectrum names Shashank Galraja GM of the Northwest Georgia Trade and Convention Center in Dalton, Ga. He was assistant GM of the Colonial Life Arena in Columbia, S.C.

TV/FILM: BET Networks names Essie Chambers senior VP of original programming. She was VP of Nickelodeon Original Movies.

RELATED FIELDS: Walt Disney names Diego Lerner president of Europe, the Middle East and Africa. He was president of Disney’s Latin America division.

SESAC appoints Ashley Miller VP of West Coast operations. She was the executive in charge of music/music supervisor at independent film production company Millenium Films/New Image Pictures.

—Edited by Mitchell Peters

GOOD WORKS

HARMONIX DONATES GAMES TO SICK KIDS

A number of children with serious medical conditions will soon have something to help ease their pain thanks to a new partnership between the videogame development company Harmonix Music Systems and the Starlight Children’s Foundation.

Along with a minimum $50,000 donation to Starlight, Harmonix, the creator of “Rock Band,” is giving away more than 650 bundles of their popular game to hospitals across the United States. The company will absorb all shipping costs, says Jenny Isaacson, VP of brand marketing and communications at Starlight. “Their support of us is very robust,” Isaacson says of Harmonix. “They, like us, firmly believe in the powerful therapeutic effect of music and that it can provide distractive entertainment therapy for seriously ill children, teens and their families, both in the hospital and on an outpatient basis.”

The foundation was founded in 1984 and is dedicated to “helping seriously ill children and their families cope with the pain, fear and isolation of serious illness through entertainment, education and family activities,” Isaacson says. —Mitchell Peters

BACKBEAT

The members of S-Curve duo Core Bears on Fire hang backstage with members of We the Kings at New York’s Roseland Ballroom, where the 15-year-old Brooklyn punk rockers joined the Florida band on stage to perform We the Kings’ “Check Yes Juliet.” From left: the Kings’ Drew Thompson, Danny Duncan and Travis Clark; S-Curve CEO Steve Greenberg; Core Bears on Fire’s Izzy and Sophie; and We the Kings’ Hunter Thompson.

Jordin Sparks’ self-titled debut album—which spawned three top five hits on Billboard’s Pop 100 singles chart including “Follow,” the Grammy Award-nominated “No Air” and “One Step at a Time”—was certified platinum by the RIAA. Sparks is currently in the studio working on her sophomore album and collaborating with producers Stargate, Dr. Luke and Toby Gad. From left: RCA/Jive Label Group chairman/CEO Barry Weiss, Sparks, Jive Entertainment’s Sterling Maloine and Jive Label Group executive VP/GM Tom Corabba. Photo courtesy of Larry Busacca
INSIDE TRACK
BACK ON ‘POINT’

For 21-year-old R&B singer Teairra Mari, a new label and a new album go a long way toward soothing hard feelings. As she prep the release of her sophomore release, “At That Point,” Mari says she feels no ill will toward her former home, Roc-a-fella Records, or her ex-boss, Jay-Z.

“It was business. They put a lot of money into the first album and it didn’t do as well as they anticipated, so they had to let me go,” Mari tells Track. “But those are my dreams. I don’t dream of working a 9-5 [job]. I’ve always had big aspirations, I always think big.”

That first album, 2005’s “Roc-a-fella Presents Teairra Mari,” sold 69,000 units in the United States its first week and has totaled 249,000 according to Nielsen SoundScan, but she was dropped before recording a second album. Mari admits that while she’s excited about the prospect of her reinvigorated music career, being released from the label made her question whether she’d return to the industry. “I just didn’t want to deal with the music business. It was cold, and I was young and didn’t understand,” she says.

“Point,” due April 7 on Fo Reel Entertainment/Interscope Records, is proof that the young singer can put those big ideas into action. All the songs were co-written by Mari and feature production by Nephew, The Movement, Jackpot Music, the Runners and Rico Love, among others. Songs include “Cause a Scene,” featuring Flo Rida, a club track about a flirtatious boyfriend, and “Built for This,” which Mari says is “close to my heart.”

“Even though my back is up against the wall, I’m still up and running and you can’t tell me I’m not built for this,” she says.

ASCAP celebrated the success of country music artist Billy Corrington’s song “Done,” which peaked in February at No. 2 on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart, with a party Feb. 24 at ASCAP’s Nashville office.

Jonathan Singleton and Jim Bever, Crostown Songs Publishing, and other industry VIPs were in attendance from left: ASCAP Nashville director of member relations Mike Sistad; Crostown Songs Publishing president Shane suff; service VP of creative Darrell Franklin and VP of disruptive Megan Galbreath; Singleton; Corrington; and publishers, BMI, Courtesy of ASCAP.
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KEYNOTE Q&A WITH ROB THOMAS

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